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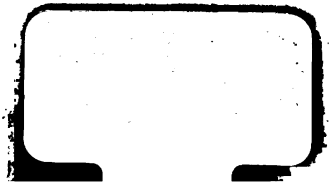

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CECILIA,

OR

MEMOIRS

OF AN

HEIRESS.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF EVELINA.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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CECILIA.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

AN APPLICATION.

CECILIA, upon her return home, heard with ſome ſurpriſe that Mr. and Mrs. Harrel were by themſelves in the drawing room; and, while ſhe was upon the ſtairs, Mrs. Harrel ran out, calling eagerly, "Is that my brother?"

Before ſhe could make an anſwer, Mr. Harrel, in the ſame impatient tone, exclaimed, "Is it Mr. Arnott?

"No;" ſaid Cecilia, "did you expect him ſo late?" "Expect him? Yes," anſwered Mr. Harrel, "I have expected him the whole evening, and cannot conceive what he has done with himſelf."

"'Tis abominably provoking," ſaid Mrs.

Harrel, "that he ſhould be out of the way juſt now when he is wanted. However, I dare ſay to-morrow will do as well."

"I don't know that," cried Mr. Harrel; "Reeves is ſuch a wretch that I am ſure he will give me all the trouble in his power."

Here Mr. Arnott entered; and Mrs. Harrel called out "O brother, we have been diſtreſſed for you cruelly; we have had a man here who has plagued Mr. Harrel to death, and we wanted you ſadly to ſpeak to him."

"I ſhould have been very glad," ſaid Mr. Arnott, "to have been of any uſe, and perhaps it is not yet too late; who is the man?"

"O," cried Mr. Harrel, careleſsly, "only a fellow from that raſcally taylor who has been ſo troubleſome to me lately. He has had the impudence, becauſe I did not pay him the moment he was pleaſed to want his money, to put the bill into the hands of one Reeves, a griping attorney, who has been here this evening, and thought proper to talk to me pretty freely. I can tell the gentleman I ſhall not eaſily forget his impertinence! however, I really wiſh mean time I could get rid of him."

"How much is the bill, Sir?" ſaid Mr. Arnott.

"Why its rather a round ſum; but I don't know how it is, one's bills mount up before one is aware: thoſe fellows

lows charge ſuch confounded ſums for tape and buckram; I hardly know what I have had of him, and yet he has run me up a bill of between three and four hundred pound."

"Here there was a general ſilence;" till Mrs. Harrel ſaid "Brother, can't you be ſo good as to lend us the money? Mr. Harrel ſays he can pay it again very ſoon."

"O yes, very ſoon," ſaid Mr. Harrel, "for I ſhall receive a great deal of money in a little time; I only want to ſtop this fellow's mouth for the preſent."

"Suppoſe I go and talk with him?" ſaid Mr. Arnott.

"O, he's a brute, a ſtock!" cried Mr. Harrel, "nothing butthe money will ſatisfy him: he will hear no reaſon; one might as well talk to a ſtone."

Mr. Arnott now looked extremely diſtreſſed; but upon his ſiſter's warmly preſſing him not to loſe any time, he gently ſaid, "If this perſon will but wait a week or two, I ſhould be extremely glad, for really juſt now I cannot take up ſo much money, without ſuch particular loſs and inconvenience, that I hardly know how to do it:—but yet, if he will not be appeaſed, he muſt certainly have it."

"Appeaſed?" cried Mr. Harrel, "you might as well appeaſe the ſea in a ſtorm! he is hard as iron."

Mr. Arnott then, forcing a ſmile, though evidently in much uneaſineſs, ſaid he would not fail to raiſe the money the next morning, and was taking his leave, when Cecilia, ſhocked that ſuch tenderneſs and good-nature ſhould be thus groſsly impoſed upon, haſtily begged to ſpeak with Mrs. Harrel, and taking her into another room, ſaid, "I beſeech you, my dear friend, let not your worthy brother ſuffer by his generoſity; permit me in the preſent exigence to aſſiſt Mr. Harrel: my having ſuch a ſum advanced can be of no conſequence; but I ſhould grieve indeed that your brother, who ſo nobly underſtands the uſe of money, ſhould take it up at any particular diſadvantage."

"You are vaſtly kind," ſaid Mrs. Harrel, "and I will run and ſpeak to them about it: but which ever of you lends the money, Mr. Harrel has aſſured me he ſhall pay it very ſoon."

She then returned with the propoſition, Mr. Arnott ſtrongly oppoſed it, but Mr. Harrel ſeemed rather to prefer it, yet ſpoke ſo confidently of his ſpeedy payment, that he appeared to think it a matter of little importance from which he accepted it. A generous conteſt enſued between Mr. Arnott and Cecilia, but as ſhe was very earneſt, ſhe at length prevailed, and ſettled to go herſelf

herſelf the next morning into the city, in order to have the money advanced by Mr. Briggs, who had the management of her fortune entirely to himſelf, her other guardians never interfering in the executive part of her affairs.

This arranged, they all retired.

And then, with encreaſing aſtoniſhment, Cecilia reflected upon the ruinous levity of Mr. Harrel, and the blind ſecurity of his wife; ſhe ſaw in their ſituation danger the moſt alarming, and in the behaviour of Mr. Harrel ſelfiſhneſs the moſt inexcuſable; ſuch glaring injuſtice to his creditors, ſuch utter inſenſibility to his friends, took from her all wiſh of aſſiſting him, though the indignant compaſſion with which ſhe ſaw the eaſy generoſity of Mr. Arnott ſo frequently abuſed, had now, for his ſake merely, induced her to relieve him.

She reſolved, however, as ſoon as the preſent difficulty was ſurmounted, to make another attempt to open the eyes of Mrs. Harrel to the evils which ſo apparently threatened her, and preſs her to exert all her influence with her huſband, by means both of example and advice, to retrench his expences before it ſhould be abſolutely too late to ſave him from ruin.

She determined alſo at the ſame time that ſhe applied for the money requiſite for this

debt, to take up enough for diſcharging her own bill at the bookſellers, and putting in execution her plan of aſſiſting the Hills.

The next morning ſhe aroſe early, and attended by her ſervant, ſet out for the houſe of Mr. Briggs, purpoſing, as the weather was clear and froſty, to walk through Oxford Road, and then put herſelf into a chair; and hoping to return to Mr. Harrel's by the uſual hour of breakfaſt.

She had not proceeded far, before ſhe ſaw a mob gathering, and the windows of almoſt all the houſes filling with ſpectators. She deſired her ſervant to enquire what this meant, and was informed that the people were aſſembling to ſee ſome malefactors paſs by in their way to Tyburn.

Alarmed at this intelligence from the fear of meeting the unhappy criminals, ſhe haſtily turned down the next ſtreet, but found that alſo filling with people who were running to the ſcene ſhe was trying to avoid: encircled thus every way, ſhe applied to a maid ſervant who was ſtanding at the door of a large houſe, and begged leave to ſtep in till the mob was gone by. The maid immediately conſented, and ſhe waited here while ſhe ſent her man for a chair.

He ſoon arrived with one; but juſt as ſhe returned to the ſtreet door, a gentleman, who was haſtily entering the houſe, ſtanding back

back to let her paſs, ſuddenly exclaimed, "Miſs Beverley!" and looking at him, ſhe perceived young Delvile.

"I cannot ſtop an inſtant," cried ſhe, running down the ſteps, "leſt the crowd ſhould prevent the chair from going on."

"Will you not firſt," ſaid he, handing her in, "tell me what news you have heard?"

"News?" repeated ſhe, "No, I have heard none!"

"You will only, then, laugh at me for thoſe officious offers you did ſo well to reject?"

"I know not what offers you mean!"

"They were indeed ſuperfluous, and therefore I wonder not you have forgotten them. Shall I tell the chairmen whither to go?"

"To Mr. Briggs. But I cannot imagine what you mean."

"To Mr. Briggs!" repeated he, "O live for ever French beads and Briſtol ſtones! freſh offers may perhaps be made there, impertinent, officious, and uſeleſs as mine!"

He then told her ſervant the direction, and, making his bow, went into the houſe ſhe had juſt quitted.

Cecilia, extremely amazed by this ſhort, but unintelligible converſation, would again have called upon him to explain his meaning,

ing, but found the crowd encreaſing ſo faſt that ſhe could not venture to detain the chair, which with difficulty made its way to the adjoining ſtreets: but her ſurprize at what had paſſed ſo entirely occupied her, that when ſhe ſtopt at the houſe of Mr. Briggs, ſhe had almoſt forgotten what had brought her thither.

The foot-boy, who came to the door, told her that his maſter was at home, but not well.

She deſired he might be acquainted that ſhe wiſhed to ſpeak to him upon buſineſs, and would wait upon him again at any hour when he thought he ſhould be able to ſee her.

The boy returned with an anſwer that ſhe might call again the next week.

Cecilia, knowing that ſo long a delay would deſtroy all the kindneſs of her intention, determined to write to him for the money, and therefore went into the parlour, and deſired to have pen and ink.

The boy, after making her wait ſome time in a room without any fire, brought her a pen and a little ink in a broken tea cup, ſaying "Maſter begs you won't ſpirt it about, for he's got no more; and all our blacking's as good as gone."

"Blacking?" repeated Cecilia.

"Yes, Miſs; when Maſter's ſhoes are blacked,

blacked, we commonly gets a little drap of freſh ink."

Cecilia promiſed to be careful, but deſired him to fetch her a ſheet of paper.

"Law, Miſs," cried the boy, with a grin, "I dare ſay maſter'd as ſoon give you a bit of his noſe! howſever, I'll go ax."

In a few minutes he again returned, and brought in his hand a ſlate and a black lead pencil; "Miſs," cried he, Maſter ſays how you may write upon this, for he ſuppoſes you've no great matters to ſay."

Cecilia, much aſtoniſhed at this extreme parſimony, was obliged to conſent, but as the point of the pencil was very blunt, deſired the boy to get her a knife that ſhe might cut it. He obeyed, but ſaid "Pray Miſs, take care it ben't known, for maſter don't do ſuch a thing once in a year, and if he know'd I'd got you the knife, he'd go nigh to give me a good polt of the head."

Cecilia then wrote upon the ſlate her deſire to be informed in what manner ſhe ſhould ſend him her receipt for 600*l.* which ſhe begged to have inſtantly advanced.

The boy came back grinning, and holding up his hands, and ſaid, "Miſs, there's a fine piece of work up ſtairs! Maſter's in a peck of troubles; but he ſays how he'll come down, if you'll ſtay till he's got his things on."

"Does he keep his bed, then? I hope I have not made him riſe?"

"No, Miſs, he don't keep his bed, only he muſt get ready, for he wears no great matters of cloaths when he's alone. You are to know, Miſs," lowering his voice, "that that day as he went abroad with our ſweep's cloaths on, he comed home in ſich a pickle you never ſee! I believe ſomebody'd knocked him in the kennel; ſo does Moll; but don't you ſay as I teld you! He's been ſpecial bad ever ſince. Moll and I was as glad as could be, becauſe he's ſo plaguy ſharp; for, to let you know, Miſs, he's ſo near, it's partly a wonder how he lives at all: and yet he's worth a power of money, too."

"Well, well," ſaid Cecilia, not very deſirous to encourage his forwardneſs, "if I want any thing, I'll call for you."

The boy, however, glad to tell his tale, went on.

"Our Moll won't ſtay with him above a week longer, Miſs, becauſe ſhe ſays how ſhe can't get nothing to eat, but juſt ſome old ſtinking ſalt meat, that's ſtayed in the butcher's ſhop ſo long, it would make a horſe ſick to look at it. But Moll's pretty nice; howſever, Miſs, to let you know, we don't get a good meal ſo often as once a quarter! why this laſt week we ha'n't had nothing at

all but ſome dry muſty red herrings; ſo you may think, Miſs, we're kept pretty ſharp!"

He was now interrupted by hearing Mr. Briggs coming down the ſtairs, upon which, abruptly breaking off his complaints, he held up his finger to his noſe in token of ſecrecy, and ran haſtily into the kitchen.

The appearance of Mr. Briggs was by no means rendered more attractive by illneſs and negligence of dreſs. He had on a flannel gown and night cap; his black beard, of many days growth, was long and grim, and upon his noſe and one of his cheeks was a large patch of brown paper, which, as he entered the room, he held on with both his hands.

Cecilia made many apologies for having diſturbed him, and ſome civil enquiries concerning his health.

"Ay, ay," cried he, pettiſhly, "bad enough: all along of that trumpery maſquerade; wiſh I had not gone! Fool for my pains."

"When were you taken ill, Sir?"

"Met with an accident; got a fall, broke my head, like to have loſt my wig. Wiſh the maſquerade at old Nick! thought it would coſt nothing, or would not have gone. Warrant ſha'n't get me ſo ſoon to another!"

"Did you fall in going home, Sir?"

"Ay,

"Ay, ay, plump in the kennel; could hardly get out of it; felt myself a going, was afraid to tear my cloaths, knew the rascal would make me pay for them, so by holding up the old sack, come bolt on my face! off pops my wig; could not tell what to do; all as dark as pitch!"

"Did not you call for help?"

"Nobody by but scrubs, knew they would not help for nothing. Scrawled out as I could, groped about for my wig, found it at last, all soused in the mud; stuck to my head like Turner's cerate."

"I hope, then, you got into an hackney coach?"

"What for? to make things worse? was not bad enough, hay?—must pay two shillings beside?"

"But how did you find yourself when you got home, Sir?"

"How? why wet as muck; my head all bumps, my cheek all cut, my nose big as two! forced to wear a plaister; half ruined in vinegar. Got a great cold; put me in a fever; never been well since."

"But have you had no advice, Sir? should not you send for a physician?"

"What to do, hay? fill me with jallop? can get it myself, can't I? Had one once; was taken very bad, thought should have popt off; began to flinch, sent for the doctor,

tor, proved nothing but a cheat! cost me a guinea, gave it at fourth visit, and he never came again!——warrant won't have no more!"

Then perceiving upon the table some dust from the black lead pencil, "What's here?" cried he, angrily, "who's been cutting the pencil? wish they were hanged; suppose its the boy; deserves to be horse-whipped: give him a good banging."

Cecilia immediately cleared him, by acknowledging she had herself been the culprit.

"Ay, ay," cried he, "thought as much all the time! guessed how it was; nothing but ruin and waste; sending for money, nobody knows why; wanting 600*l.*—what to do? throw it in the dirt? Never heard the like! Sha'n't have it, promise you that," nodding his head, "shan't have no such thing!"

"Sha'n't have it?" cried Cecilia, much surprised, "why not, Sir?"

"Keep it for your husband; get you one soon: won't have no juggling. Don't be in a hurry; one in my eye."

Cecilia then began a very earnest expostulation, assuring him she really wanted the money, for an occasion which would not admit of delay.

Her remonstrances, however, he wholly disregarded, telling her that girls knew nothing

thing of the value of money, and ought not to be truſted with it; that he would not hear of ſuch extravagance, and was reſolved not to advance her a penny.

Cecilia was both provoked and confounded by a refuſal ſo unexpected, and as ſhe thought herſelf bound in honour to Mr. Harrel not to make known the motive of her urgency, ſhe was for ſome time totally ſilenced: till recollecting her account with the bookſeller, ſhe determined to reſt her plea upon that, perſuaded that he could not, at leaſt, deny her money to pay her own bills.

He heard her, however, with the utmoſt contempt; "Books?" he cried, "what do you want with books? do no good; all loſt time; words get no caſh."

She informed him his admonitions were now too late, as ſhe had already received them, and muſt therefore neceſſarily pay for them.

"No, no," cried he, "ſend 'em back, that's beſt; keep no ſuch rubbiſh, won't turn to account; do better without 'em."

"That, Sir, will be impoſſible, for I have had them ſome time, and cannot expect the bookſeller to take them again."

"Muſt, muſt," cried he," "can't help himſelf; glad to have 'em too. Are but a minor, can't be made pay a farthing."

Cecilia with much indignation heard ſuch fraud recommended, and told him ſhe could by no means conſent to follow his advice. But ſhe ſoon found, to her utter amazement, that he ſteadily refuſed to give her any other, or to beſtow the ſlighteſt attention upon her expoſtulations, ſturdily ſaying that her uncle had left her a noble eſtate, and he would take care to ſee it put in proper hands, by getting her a good and careful huſband.

"I have no intention, no wiſh, Sir," cried ſhe, "to break into the income of eſtate left me by my uncle; on the contrary, I hold them ſacred, and think myſelf bound in conſcience never to live beyond them: but the 10,000*l.* bequeathed me by my Father, I regard as more peculiarly my own property, and therefore think myſelf at liberty to diſpoſe of it as I pleaſe."

"What," cried he, in a rage, "make it over to a ſcrubby bookſeller! give it up for an old pot-hook? no, no, won't ſuffer it; ſha'n't be, ſha'n't be, I ſay! if you want ſome books, go to Moorfields, pick up enough at an old ſtall; get 'em at two-pence a-piece; dear enough, too."

Cecilia for ſome time hoped he was merely indulging his ſtrange and ſordid humour by an oppoſition that was only intended to teize her; but ſhe ſoon found herſelf extremely

tremely mistaken: he was immoveable in obstinacy, as he was incorrigible in avarice; he neither troubled himself with enquiries nor reasoning, but was contented with refusing her as a child might be refused, by peremptorily telling her she did not know what she wanted, and therefore should not have what she asked.

And with this answer, after all that she could urge, she was compelled to leave the house, as he complained that his brown paper plaister wanted fresh dipping in vinegar, and he could stay talking no longer.

The disgust with which this behaviour filled her, was doubled by the shame and concern of returning to the Harrels with her promise unperformed; she deliberated upon every method that occurred to her of still endeavouring to serve them, but could suggest nothing, except trying to prevail upon Mr. Delvile to interfere in her favour. She liked not, indeed, the office of solicitation to so haughty a man, but, having no other expedient, her repugnance gave way to her generosity, and she ordered the chairmen to carry her to St. James's Square.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

A PERPLEXITY.

AND here, at the door of his Father's houſe, and juſt aſcending the ſteps, ſhe perceived young Delvile.

"Again!" cried he, handing her out of the chair, "ſurely ſome good genius is at work for me this morning!"

She told him ſhe ſhould not have called ſo early, now ſhe was acquainted with the late hours of Mrs. Delvile, but that ſhe merely meant to ſpeak with his Father, for two minutes, upon buſineſs.

He attended her up ſtairs, and finding ſhe was in haſte, went himſelf with her meſſage to Mr. Delvile: and ſoon returned with an anſwer that he would wait upon her preſently.

The ſtrange ſpeeches he had made to her when they firſt met in the morning now recurring to her memory, ſhe determined to have them explained, and in order to lead to the ſubject, mentioned the diſagreeable ſituation in which he had found her, while ſhe was ſtanding up to avoid the ſight of the condemned malefactors.

"Indeed?"

"Indeed?" cried he, in a tone of voice ſomewhat incredulous, "and was that the purpoſe for which you ſtood up?"

"Certainly, Sir;—what other could I have?"

"None, ſurely!" ſaid he, ſmiling, "but the accident was ſingularly opportune."

"Opportune?" cried Cecilia, ſtaring, "how opportune? this is the ſecond time in the ſame morning that I am not able to underſtand you!"

"How *ſhould* you underſtand what is ſo little intelligible?"

"I ſee you have ſome meaning which I cannot fathom, why, elſe, ſhould it be ſo extraordinary that I ſhould endeavour to avoid a mob? or how could it be opportune that I ſhould happen to meet with one?"

He laughed at firſt without making any anſwer; but perceiving ſhe looked at him with impatience, he half gayly, half reproachfully, ſaid, "Whence is it that young ladies, even ſuch whoſe principles are moſt ſtrict, ſeem univerſally, in thoſe affairs where their affections are concerned, to think hypocriſy neceſſary, and deceit amiable? and hold it graceful to diſavow to-day, what they may perhaps mean publicly to acknowledge to-morrow?"

Cecilia, who heard theſe queſtions with unfeigned

unfeigned aſtoniſhment, looked at him with the utmoſt eagerneſs for an explanation.

"Do you ſo much wonder," he continued, "that I ſhould have hoped in Miſs Beverley to have ſeen ſome deviation from ſuch rules? and have expected more openneſs and candour in a young lady who has given ſo noble a proof of the liberality of her mind and underſtanding?"

"You amaze me beyond meaſure!" cried ſhe, "what rules, what candour, what liberality, do you mean?"

"Muſt I ſpeak yet more plainly? and if I do, will you bear to hear me?"

"Indeed I ſhould be extremely glad if you would give me leave to underſtand you."

"And may I tell you what has charmed me, as well as what I have preſumed to wonder at?"

"You may tell me any thing, if you will but be leſs myſterious."

"Forgive then the frankneſs you invite, and let me acknowledge to you how greatly I honour the nobleneſs of your conduct. Surrounded as you are by the opulent and the ſplendid, unſhackled by dependance, unreſtrained by authority, bleſt by nature with all that is attractive, by ſituation with all that is deſirable,—to ſlight the rich, and

diſregard

disregard the powerful, for the purer pleasure of raising oppressed merit, and giving to desert that wealth in which alone it seemed deficient—how can a spirit so liberal be sufficiently admired, or a choice of so much dignity be too highly extolled?"

"I find," cried Cecilia, "I must forbear any further enquiry, for the more I hear, the less I understand."

"Pardon me, then," cried he, "if here I return to my first question: whence is it that a young lady who can think so nobly, and act so disinterestedly, should not be uniformly great, simple in truth, and unaffected in sincerity? Why should she be thus guarded, where frankness would do her so much honour? Why blush in owning what all others may blush in envying?"

"Indeed you perplex me intolerably;" cried Cecilia, with some vexation, "Why, Sir, will you not be more explicit?"

"And why, Madam," returned he, with a laugh, "would you tempt me to be more impertinent? have I not said strange things already?"

"Strange indeed," cried she, "for not one of them can I comprehend!"

"Pardon, then," cried he, "and forget them all! I scarce know myself what urged me to say them, but I began inadvertently, without intending to go on, and I have proceeded

proceeded involuntarily, without knowing how to ſtop. The fault, however, is ultimately your own, for the ſight of you creates an inſurmountable deſire to converſe with you, and your converſation a propenſity equally incorrigible to take ſome intereſt in your welfare."

He would then have changed the diſcourſe, and Cecilia, aſhamed of preſſing him further, was for ſome time ſilent; but when one of the ſervants came to inform her that his maſter meant to wait upon her directly, her unwillingneſs to leave the matter in ſuſpence induced her, ſomewhat abruptly, to ſay, "Perhaps, Sir, you are thinking of Mr. Belfield?"

"A happy conjecture!" cried he, "but ſo wild a one, I cannot but marvel how it ſhould occur to you!"

"Well, Sir," ſaid ſhe, "I muſt acknowledge I now underſtand your meaning; but with reſpect to what has given riſe to it, I am as much a ſtranger as ever."

The entrance of Mr. Delvile here cloſed the converſation.

He began with his uſual oſtentatious apologies, declaring he had ſo many people to attend, ſo many complaints to hear, and ſo many grievances to redreſs, that it was impoſſible for him to wait upon her ſooner,

and

and not without difficulty that he waited upon her now.

Mean time his ſon almoſt immediately retired: and Cecilia, inſtead of liſtening to this harangue, was only diſturbing herſelf with conjectures upon what had juſt paſſed. She ſaw that young Delvile concluded ſhe was abſolutely engaged to Mr. Belfield, and though ſhe was better pleaſed that any ſuſpicion ſhould fall there than upon Sir Robert Floyer, ſhe was yet both provoked and concerned to be ſuſpected at all. An attack ſo earneſt from almoſt any other perſon could hardly have failed being very offenſive to her, but in the manners of young Delvile good breeding was ſo happily blended with frankneſs, that his freedom ſeemed merely to reſult from the openneſs of his diſpoſition, and even in its very act pleaded its own excuſe.

Her reverie was at length interrupted by Mr. Delvile's deſiring to know in what he could ſerve her.

She told him ſhe had preſent occaſion for 600*l.* and hoped he would not object to her taking up that ſum.

"Six hundred pounds," ſaid he, after ſome deliberation, "is rather an extraordinary demand for a young lady in your ſituation; your allowance is conſiderable, you

you have yet no houſe, no equipage, no eſtabliſhment; your expences, I ſhould imagine, cannot be very great—"

He ſtopt, and ſeemed weighing her requeſt.

Cecilia, ſhocked at appearing extravagant, yet too generous to mention Mr. Harrel, had again recourſe to her bookſeller's bill, which ſhe told him ſhe was anxious to diſcharge.

"A bookſeller's bill?" cried he; "and do you want 600*l.* for a bookſeller's bill?"

"No, Sir," ſaid ſhe, ſtammering, "no, —not all for that,—I have ſome other—I have a particular occaſion——"

"But what bill at all," cried he, with much ſurpriſe, "can a young lady have with a bookſeller? The Spectator, Tatler and Guardian, would make library ſufficient for any female in the kingdom, nor do I think it like a gentlewoman to have more. Beſides, if you ally yourſelf in ſuch a manner as I ſhall approve and recommend, you will, in all probability, find already collected more books than there can ever be any poſſible occaſion for you to look into. And let me counſel you to remember that a lady, whether ſo called from birth or only from fortune, ſhould never degrade

herſelf by being put on a level with writers, and ſuch ſort of people."

Cecilia thanked him for his advice, but confeſſed that upon the preſent occaſion it came too late, as the books were now actually in her own poſſeſſion.

"And have you taken," cried he, "ſuch a meaſure as this without conſulting me? I thought I had aſſured you my opinion was always at your ſervice when you were in any dilemma."

"Yes, Sir," anſwered Cecilia; "but I knew how much you were occupied, and wiſhed to avoid taking up your time."

"I cannot blame your modeſty," he replied, "and therefore, as you have contracted the debt, you are, in honour, bound to pay it. Mr. Briggs, however, has the entire management of your fortune, my many avocations obliging me to decline ſo laborious a truſt; apply, therefore, to him, and, as things are ſituated, I will make no oppoſition to your demand."

"I have already, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, "ſpoke to Mr. Briggs, but——"

"You went to him firſt, then?" interrupted Mr. Delvile, with a look of much diſpleaſure.

"I was unwilling, Sir, to trouble you till I found it unavoidable." She then acquainted

acquainted him with Mr. Briggs's refusal, and entreated he would do her the favour to intercede in her behalf, that the money might no longer be denied her.

Every word she spoke his pride seemed rising to resent, and when she had done, after regarding her some time with apparent indignation, he said, "*I* intercede! *I* become an agent!"

Cecilia, amazed to find him thus violently irritated, made a very earnest apology for her request; but without paying her any attention, he walked up and down the room, exclaiming, "an agent! and to Mr. Briggs!—This is an affront I could never have expected! why did I degrade myself by accepting this humiliating office? I ought to have known better!" Then, turning to Cecilia, "Child," he added, "for whom is it you take me, and for what?"

Cecilia again, though affronted in her turn, began some protestations of respect; but haughtily interrupting her, he said, "If of me, and of my rank in life you judge by Mr. Briggs or by Mr. Harrel, I may be subject to proposals such as these every day; suffer me, therefore, for your better information, to hint to you, that the head of an ancient and honourable house, is apt to think himself somewhat superior

to people but juſt riſing from duſt and obſcurity."

Thunderſtruck by this imperious reproof, ſhe could attempt no further vindication; but when he obſerved her conſternation, he was ſomewhat appeaſed, and hoping he had now impreſſed her with a proper ſenſe of his dignity, he more gently ſaid, "You did not, I believe, intend to inſult me."

"Good Heaven, Sir; no!" cried Cecilia, "nothing was more diſtant from my thoughts: if my expreſſions have been faulty, it has been wholly from ignorance."

"Well, well, we will think then no more of it."

She then ſaid ſhe would no longer detain him, and, without daring to again mention her petition, ſhe wiſhed him good morning.

He ſuffered her to go, yet, as ſhe left the room, graciouſly ſaid, "Think no more of my diſpleaſure, for it is over: I ſee you were not aware of the extraordinary thing you propoſed. I am ſorry I cannot poſſibly aſſiſt you; on any other occaſion you may depend upon my ſervices; but you know Mr. Briggs, you have ſeen him yourſelf,—judge, then, how a man of any faſhion is to accommodate himſelf with ſuch a perſon!"

Cecilia

Cecilia concurred, and, courtſying, took her leave.

"Ah! thought ſhe, in her way home, how happy is it for me that I followed the advice of Mr. Monckton! elſe I had ſurely made intereſt to become an inmate of that houſe, and then indeed, as he wiſely foreſaw, I ſhould inevitably have been overwhelmed by this pompous inſolence! no family, however amiable, could make amends for ſuch a maſter of it.

CHAP. III.

An Admonition.

THE Harrels and Mr. Arnott waited the return of Cecilia with the utmoſt impatience; ſhe told them with much concern the failure of her embaſſy, which Mr. Harrel heard with viſible reſentment and diſcontent, while Mr. Arnott, entreating him not to think of it, again made an offer of his ſervices, and declared he would diſregard all perſonal inconvenience for the pleaſure of making him and his ſiſter eaſy.

Cecilia was much mortified that ſhe had not the power to act the ſame part, and aſked Mr. Harrel whether he believed his own influence with Mr. Briggs would be more ſucceſsful.

"No, no," anſwered he, "the old curmudgeon would but the rather refuſe. I know his reaſon, and therefore am ſure all pleas will be vain. He has dealings in the alley, and I dare ſay games with your money as if it were his own. There is, indeed, one way——but I do not think you would like it——though I proteſt I hardly

hardly know why not——however, 'tis as well let alone."

Cecilia inſiſted upon hearing what he meant, and, after ſome heſitation, he hinted that there were means by which, with very little inconvenience, ſhe might borrow the money.

Cecilia, with that horror natural to all unpractiſed minds at the firſt idea of contracting a voluntary debt, ſtarted at this ſuggeſtion, and ſeemed very ill diſpoſed to liſten to it. Mr. Harrel, perceiving her repugnance, turned to Mr. Arnott, and ſaid, "Well, my good brother, I hardly know how to ſuffer you to ſell out at ſuch a loſs, but yet, my preſent neceſſity is ſo urgent——"

"Don't mention it," cried Mr. Arnott, "I am very ſorry I let you know it; be certain, however, that while I have any thing, it is yours and my ſiſters."

The two gentlemen were then retiring together; but Cecilia, ſhocked for Mr. Arnott, though unmoved by Mr. Harrel, ſtopt them to enquire what was the way by which it was meant ſhe could borrow the money?

Mr. Harrel ſeemed averſe to anſwer, but ſhe would not be refuſed; and then he mentioned a Jew, of whoſe honeſty he had made undoubted trial, and who, as ſhe was

ſo near being of age, would accept very trifling intereſt for whatever ſhe ſhould like to take up.

The heart of Cecilia recoiled at the very mention of a *Jew*, and *taking up money upon intereſt*; but, impelled ſtrongly by her own generoſity to emulate that of Mr. Arnott, ſhe agreed, after ſome heſitation, to have recourſe to this method.

Mr. Harrel then made ſome faint denials, and Mr. Arnott proteſted he had a thouſand times rather ſell out at any diſcount, than conſent to her taking ſuch a meaſure; but, when her firſt reluctance was conquered, all that he urged ſerved but to ſhew his worthineſs in a ſtronger light, and only encreaſed her deſire of ſaving him from ſuch repeated impoſition.

Her total ignorance in what manner to tranſact this buſineſs, made her next put it wholly into the hands of Mr. Harrel, whom ſhe begged to take up 600*l.* upon ſuch terms as he thought equitable, and to which, whatever they might be, ſhe would ſign her name.

He ſeemed ſomewhat ſurpriſed at the ſum, but without any queſtion or objection undertook the commiſſion: and Cecilia would not leſſen it, becauſe unwilling to do more for the ſecurity of the luxurious Mr. Harrel, than for the diſtreſſes of the laborious Hills.

Nothing

Nothing could be more ſpeedy than the execution of this affair, Mr. Harrel was diligent and expert, the whole was ſettled that morning, and, giving to the Jew her bond for the payment at the intereſt he required, ſhe put into the hands of Mr. Harrel 350 *l.* for which he gave his receipt, and ſhe kept the reſt for her own purpoſes.

She intended the morning after this tranſaction to ſettle her account with the bookſeller. When ſhe went into the parlour to breakfaſt, ſhe was ſomewhat ſurpriſed to ſee Mr. Harrel ſeated there, in earneſt diſcourſe with his wife. Fearful of interrupting a tête à tête ſo uncommon, ſhe would have retired, but Mr. Harrel, calling after her, ſaid "O pray come in! I am only telling Priſcilla a piece of my uſual ill luck. You muſt know I happen to be in immediate want of 200 *l.* though only for three or four days, and I ſent to order honeſt old Aaron to come hither directly with the money, but it ſo happens that he went out of town the moment he had done with us yeſterday, and will not be back again this week. Now I don't believe there is another Jew in the kingdom who will let me have money upon the ſame terms: they are ſuch notorious raſcals, that I hate the very thought of employing them."

Cecilia, who could not but underſtand

what this meant, was too much diſpleaſed both by his extravagance and his indelicacy, to feel at all inclined to change the deſtination of the money ſhe had juſt received; and therefore coolly agreed that it was unfortunate, but added nothing more.

"O, it is provoking indeed," cried he, "for the extra-intereſt I muſt pay one of thoſe extortioners is abſolutely ſo much money thrown away."

Cecilia, ſtill without noticing theſe hints, began her breakfaſt. Mr. Harrel then ſaid he would take his tea with them: and, while he was buttering ſome dry toaſt, exclaimed, as if from ſudden recollection, "O Lord, now I think of it, I believe, Miſs Beverley, you can lend me this money yourſelf for a day or two. The moment old Aaron comes to town, I will pay you."

Cecilia, whoſe generoſity, however extenſive, was neither thoughtleſs nor indiſcriminate, found ſomething ſo repulſive in this groſs procedure, that inſtead of aſſenting to his requeſt with her uſual alacrity, ſhe anſwered very gravely that the money ſhe had juſt received was already appropriated to a particular purpoſe, and ſhe knew not how to defer making uſe of it.

Mr. Harrel was extremely chagrined by this reply, which was by no means what he expected; but, toſſing down a diſh of tea, he

he began humming an air, and ſoon recovered his uſual unconcern.

In a few minutes, ringing his bell, he deſired a ſervant to go to Mr. Zackery, and inform him that he wanted to ſpeak with him immediately.

"And now," ſaid he, with a look in which vexation ſeemed ſtruggling with careleſsneſs, "the thing is done! I don't like, indeed, to get into ſuch hands, for 'tis hard ever to get out of them when once one begins,—and hitherto I have kept pretty clear. But there's no help for it—Mr. Arnott cannot juſt now aſſiſt me — and ſo the thing muſt take its courſe. Priſcilla, why do you look ſo grave?"

"I am thinking how unlucky it is my Brother ſhould happen to be unable to lend you this money."

"O, don't think about it; I ſhall get rid of the man very ſoon I dare ſay—I hope ſo, at leaſt——I am ſure I mean it."

Cecilia now grew a little diſturbed; ſhe looked at Mrs. Harrel, who ſeemed alſo uneaſy, and then, with ſome heſitation, ſaid "Have you really never, Sir, employed this man before?"

"Never in my life: never any but old Aaron. I dread the whole race; I have a ſort of ſuperſtitious notion that if once I get into their clutches, I ſhall never be my own

man again; and that induced me to beg your aſſiſtance. However, 'tis no great matter."

She then began to waver; ſhe feared there might be future miſchief as well as preſent inconvenience, in his applying to new uſurers, and knowing ſhe had now the power to prevent him, thought herſelf half cruel in refuſing to exert it. She wiſhed to conſult Mr. Monckton, but found it neceſſary to take her meaſures immediately, as the Jew was already ſent for, and muſt in a few moments be either employed or diſcarded.

Much perplext how to act, between a deſire of doing good, and a fear of encouraging evil, ſhe weighed each ſide haſtily, but while ſtill uncertain which ought to preponderate, her kindneſs for Mrs. Harrel interfered, and, in the hope of reſcuing her huſband from further bad practices, ſhe ſaid ſhe would poſtpone her own buſineſs for the few days he mentioned, rather than ſee him compelled to open any new account with ſo dangerous a ſet of men.

He thanked her in his uſual negligent manner, and accepting the 200 *l.* gave her his receipt for it, and a promiſe ſhe ſhould be paid in a week.

Mrs. Harrel, however, ſeemed more grateful, and with many embraces ſpoke her ſenſe of this friendly good nature. Cecilia, happy

from

from believing ſhe had revived in her ſome ſpark of ſenſibility, determined to avail herſelf of ſo favourable a ſymptom, and enter at once upon the diſagreeable taſk ſhe had ſet herſelf, of repreſenting to her the danger of her preſent ſituation.

As ſoon, therefore, as breakfaſt was done, and Mr. Arnott, who came in before it was over, was gone, with a view to excite her attention by raiſing her curioſity, ſhe begged the favour of a private conference in her own room, upon matters of ſome importance.

She began with hoping that the friendſhip in which they had ſo long lived would make her pardon the liberty ſhe was going to take, and which nothing leſs than their former intimacy, joined to ſtrong apprehenſions for her future welfare, could authoriſe; "But oh Priſcilla!" ſhe continued, "with open eyes to ſee your danger, yet not warn you of it, would be a reſerve treacherous in a friend, and cruel even in a fellow-creature."

"What danger?" cried Mrs. Harrel, much alarmed, "do you think me ill? do I look conſumptive?"

"Yes, conſumptive indeed!" ſaid Cecilia, "but not, I hope, in your conſtitution."

And then, with all the tenderneſs in her power, ſhe came to the point, and conjured her without delay to retrench her expences,

and change her thoughtleſs way of life for one more conſiderate and domeſtic.

Mrs. Harrel, with much ſimplicity, aſſured her *ſhe did nothing but what every body elſe did*, and that it was quite impoſſible for her to *appear in the world* in any other manner.

"But how are you to appear hereafter?" cried Cecilia, "if now you live beyond your income, you muſt conſider that in time your income by ſuch depredations will be exhauſted."

"But I declare to you," anſwered Mrs. Harrel, "I never run in debt for more than half a year, for as ſoon as I receive my own money, I generally pay it away every ſhilling: and ſo borrow what I want till pay day comes round again."

"And that," ſaid Cecilia, "ſeems a method expreſsly deviſed for keeping you eternally comfortleſs: pardon me, however, for ſpeaking ſo openly, but I fear Mr. Harrel himſelf muſt be even ſtill leſs attentive and accurate in his affairs, or he could not ſo frequently be embarraſſed. And what is to be the reſult? look but, my dear Priſcilla, a little forward, and you will tremble at the proſpect before you!"

Mrs. Harrel ſeemed frightened at this ſpeech, and begged to know what ſhe would have them do?

Cecilia then, with equal wiſdom and friend-

friendlineſs, propoſed a general reform in the houſhold, the public and private expences of both: ſhe adviſed that a ſtrict examination might be made into the ſtate of their affairs, that all their bills ſhould be called in, and faithfully paid, and that an entire new plan of life ſhould be adopted, according to the ſituation of their fortune and income when cleared of all incumbrances.

"Lord, my dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Harrel, with a look of aſtoniſhment, "why Mr. Harrel would no more do all this than fly! If I was only to make ſuch a propoſal, I dare ſay he would laugh in my face."

"And why?"

"Why?—why becauſe it would ſeem ſuch an odd thing—it's what nobody thinks of—though I am ſure I am very much obliged to you for mentioning it.—Shall we go down ſtairs? I think I heard ſomebody come in."

"No matter who comes in," ſaid Cecilia, "reflect for a moment upon my propoſal, and, at leaſt, if you diſapprove it, ſuggeſt ſomething more eligible."

"O, it's a very good propoſal, that I agree," ſaid Mrs. Harrel, looking very weary," but only the thing is it's quite impoſſible."

"Why

"Why so? why is it impossible?"

"Why because—dear, I don't know—but I am sure it is."

"But what is your reason? What makes you sure of it?"

"Lord, I can't tell—but I know it is—because—I am very certain it is."

Argument such as this, though extremely fatiguing to the understanding of Cecilia, had yet no power to *blunt her purpose:* she warmly expostulated against the weakness of her defence, strongly represented the imprudence of her conduct, and exhorted her by every tie of justice, honour and discretion to set about a reformation.

"Why what can I do?" cried Mrs. Harrel, impatiently, "one must live a little like other people. You would not have me be stared at, I suppose; and I am sure I don't know what I do that every body else does not do too."

"But were it not better," said Cecilia, with more energy, "to think less of *other people*, and more of *yourself?* to consult your own fortune, and your own situation in life, instead of being blindly guided by those of *other people?* If, indeed, *other people* would be responsible for your losses, for the diminution of your wealth, and for the disorder of your affairs, then might you rationally make

make their way of life the example of yours: but you cannot flatter yourſelf ſuch will be the caſe; you know better; your loſſes, your diminiſhed fortune, your embarraſſed circumſtances will be all your own! pitied, perhaps, by ſome, but blamed by more, and aſſiſted by none!"

"Good Lord, Miſs Beverley!" cried Mrs. Harrel, ſtarting, "you talk juſt as if we were ruined!"

"I mean not that," replied Cecilia, "but I would fain, by pointing out your danger, prevail with you to prevent in time ſo dreadful a cataſtrophe."

Mrs. Harrel, more affronted than alarmed, heard this anſwer with much diſpleaſure, and after a ſullen heſitation, peeviſhly ſaid, "I muſt own I don't take it very kind of you to ſay ſuch frightful things to me; I am ſure we only live like the reſt of the world, and I don't ſee why a man of Mr. Harrel's fortune ſhould live any worſe. As to his having now and then a little debt or two, it is nothing but what every body elſe has. You only think it ſo odd, becauſe you a'n't uſed to it: but you are quite miſtaken if you ſuppoſe he does not mean to pay, for he told me this morning that as ſoon as ever he receives his rents, he intends to diſcharge every bill he has in the world."

"I

"I am very glad to hear it," anſwered Cecilia, "and I heartily wiſh he may have the reſolution to adhere to his purpoſe. I feared you would think me impertinent, but you do worſe in believing me unkind: friendſhip and good-will could alone have induced me to hazard what I have ſaid to you. I muſt, however, have done; though I cannot forbear adding that I hope what has already paſſed will ſometimes recur to you."

They then ſeparated; Mrs. Harrel half angry at remonſtrances ſhe thought only cenſorious, and Cecilia offended at her petiſhneſs and folly, though grieved at her blindneſs.

She was ſoon, however, recompenſed for this vexation by a viſit from Mrs. Delvile, who, finding her alone, ſat with her ſome time, and by her ſpirit, underſtanding and elegance, diſſipated all her chagrin.

From another circumſtance, alſo, ſhe received much pleaſure, though a little perplexity; Mr. Arnott brought her word that Mr. Belfield, almoſt quite well, had actually left his lodgings, and was gone into the country.

She now half ſuſpected that the account of his illneſs given her by young Delvile, was merely the effect of his curioſity to diſcover her ſentiments of him; yet when ſhe conſidered

considered how foreign to his character appeared every ſpecies of artifice, ſhe exculpated him from the deſign, and concluded that the impatient ſpirit of Belfield had hurried him away, when really unfit for travelling. She had no means, however, to hear more of him now he had quitted the town, and therefore, though uneaſy, ſhe was compelled to be patient.

In the evening ſhe had again a viſit from Mr. Monckton, who, though he was now acquainted how much ſhe was at home, had the forbearance to avoid making frequent uſe of that knowledge, that his attendance might eſcape obſervation.

Cecilia, as uſual, ſpoke to him of all her affairs with the utmoſt openneſs; and as her mind was now chiefly occupied by her apprehenſions for the Harrels, ſhe communicated to him the extravagance of which they were guilty, and hinted at the diſtreſs that from time to time it occaſioned; but the aſſiſtance ſhe had afforded them her own delicacy prevented her mentioning.

Mr. Monckton ſcrupled not from this account inſtantly to pronounce Harrel a *ruined man*; and thinking Cecilia, from her connection with him, in much danger of being involved in his future difficulties, he moſt earneſtly exhorted her to ſuffer no inducement to prevail with her to advance him

him any money, confidently affirming ſhe would have little chance of being ever repaid.

Cecilia liſtened to this charge with much alarm, but readily promiſed future circumſpection. She confeſſed to him the conference ſhe had had in the morning with Mrs. Harrel, and after lamenting her determined neglect of her affairs, ſhe added, "I cannot but own that my eſteem for her, even more than my affection, has leſſened almoſt every day ſince I have been in her houſe; but this morning, when I ventured to ſpeak to her with earneſtneſs, I found her powers of reaſoning ſo weak, and her infatuation to luxury and expence ſo ſtrong, that I have ever ſince felt aſhamed of my own want of diſcernment in having formerly ſelected her for my friend."

"When you gave her that title," ſaid Mr. Monckton, "you had little choice in your power; her ſweetneſs and good-nature attracted you; childhood is never troubled with foreſight, and youth is ſeldom difficult: ſhe was lively and pleaſing, you were generous and affectionate; your acquaintance with her was formed while you were yet too young to know your own worth, your fondneſs of her grew from habit, and before the inferiority of her parts had weakened your regard, by offending your judgment, her early

early marriage ſeparated you from her entirely. But now you meet again the ſcene is altered; three years of abſence ſpent in the cultivation of an underſtanding naturally of the firſt order, by encreaſing your wiſdom, has made you more faſtidious; while the ſame time ſpent by her in mere idleneſs and ſhew, has hurt her diſpoſition, without adding to her knowledge, and robbed her of her natural excellencies, without enriching her with acquired ones. You ſee her now with impartiality, for you ſee her almoſt as a ſtranger, and all thoſe deficiencies which retirement and inexperience had formerly concealed, her vanity, and her ſuperficial acquaintance with the world, have now rendered glaring. But folly weakens all bands. remember, therefore, if you would form a ſolid friendſhip, to conſult not only the heart but the head, not only the temper, but the underſtanding."

"Well, then," ſaid Cecilia, "at leaſt it muſt be confeſſed I have judiciouſly choſen *you!*"

"You have, indeed, done me the higheſt honour," he anſwered.

They then talked of Belfield, and Mr. Monckton confirmed the account of Mr. Arnott, that he had left London in good health.

health. After which, he enquired if ſhe had ſeen any thing more of the Delviles?

"Yes," ſaid Cecilia, "Mrs. Delvile called upon me this morning. She is a delightful woman; I am ſorry you know her not enough to do her juſtice."

"Is ſhe civil to you?"

"Civil? ſhe is all kindneſs!"

"Then depend upon it ſhe has ſomething in view: whenever that is not the caſe, ſhe is all inſolence. And Mr. Delvile,—pray what do you think of him?"

"O, I think him inſufferable! and I cannot ſufficiently thank you for that timely caution which prevented my change of habitation. I would not live under the ſame roof with him for the world!"

"Well, and do you not now begin alſo to ſee the ſon properly?"

"Properly? I don't underſtand you."

"Why as the very ſon of ſuch parents, haughty and impertinent."

"No, indeed; he has not the ſmalleſt reſemblance of his father, and if he reſembles his mother, it is only what every one muſt wiſh who impartially ſees her.

"You know not that family. But how, indeed, ſhould you, when they are in a combination to prevent your getting that knowledge? They have all their deſigns upon

upon you, and if you are not carefully upon your guard, you will be the dupe to them."

"What can you poſſibly mean?"

"Nothing but what every body elſe muſt immediately ſee; they have a great ſhare of pride, and a ſmall one of wealth; you ſeem by fortune to be flung in their way, and doubtleſs they mean not to neglect ſo inviting an opportunity of repairing their eſtates."

"Indeed you are miſtaken; I am certain they have no ſuch intention: on the contrary, they all even teazingly perſiſt in thinking me already engaged elſewhere."

She then gave him a hiſtory of their ſeveral ſuſpicions. "The impertinence of report," ſhe added, "has ſo much convinced them that Sir Robert Floyer and Mr. Belfield fought merely as rivals, that I can only clear myſelf of partiality for one of them, to have it inſtantly concluded I feel it for the other. And, far from ſeeming hurt that I appear to be diſpoſed of, Mr. Delvile openly ſeconds the pretenſions of Sir Robert, and his ſon officiouſly perſuades me that I am already Mr. Belfield's."

"Tricks, nothing but tricks to diſcover your real ſituation."

He

He then gave her ſome general cautions to be upon her guard againſt their artifices, and changing the ſubject, talked, for the reſt of his viſit, upon matters of general entertainment.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

An Evasion.

CECILIA now for about a fortnight paſſed her time without incident: the Harrels continued their accuſtomed diſſipation, Sir Robert Floyer, without even ſeeking a private conference, perſevered in his attentions, and Mr. Arnott, though ſtill ſilent and humble, ſeemed only to live by the pleaſure of beholding her. She ſpent two whole days with Mrs. Delvile, both of which ſerved to confirm her admiration of that lady and of her ſon; and ſhe joined the parties of the Harrels, or ſtayed quietly at home, according to her ſpirits and inclinations: while ſhe was viſited by Mr. Monckton often enough to ſatisfy him with her proceedings, yet too ſeldom to betray either to herſelf or to the world any ſuſpicion of his deſigns.

Her 200*l.* however, which was to have been returned at the end of the firſt week, though a fortnight was now elapſed, had not even been mentioned: ſhe began to grow very impatient, but not knowing what courſe to purſue, and wanting courage to

remind Mr. Harrel of his promiſe, ſhe ſtill waited the performance of it without ſpeaking.

At this time, preparations were making in the family for removing to Violet-bank to ſpend the Eaſter holidays: but Cecilia, who was too much grieved at ſuch perpetual encreaſe of unneceſſary expences to have any enjoyment in new proſpects of entertainment, had at preſent ſome buſineſs of her own which gave her full employment.

The poor carpenter, whoſe family ſhe had taken under her protection, was juſt dead, and, as ſoon as the laſt duties had been paid him, ſhe ſent for his widow, and after trying to conſole her for the loſs ſhe had ſuffered, aſſured her ſhe was immediately ready to fulfil the engagement into which ſhe had entered, of aſſiſting her to undertake ſome better method of procuring a livelihood; and therefore deſired to know in what manner ſhe could ſerve her, and what ſhe thought herſelf able to do.

The good woman, pouring forth thanks and praiſes innumerable, anſwered that ſhe had a Couſin, who had offered, for a certain premium, to take her into partnerſhip in a ſmall haberdaſher's ſhop. "But then, madam," continued ſhe, "it's quite morally impoſſible I ſhould raiſe ſuch a ſum, or elſe, to be ſure, ſuch a ſhop as that, now I am

I am grown ſo poorly, would be quite a heaven upon earth to me: for my ſtrength, madam, is almoſt all gone away, and when I do any hard work, it's quite a piteous ſight to ſee me, for I am all in a tremble after it, juſt as if I had an ague, and yet all the time my hands, madam, will be burning like a coal!"

"You have indeed been overworked," ſaid Cecilia, "and it is high time your feeble frame ſhould have ſome reſt. What is the ſum your couſin demands?"

"O madam, more than I ſhould be able to get together in all my life! for earn what I will, it goes as faſt as it comes, becauſe there's many mouths, and ſmall pay, and two of the little ones that can't help at all; —and there's no Billy, madam, to work for us now!"

"But tell me, what is the ſum?"

"Sixty pound, madam."

"You ſhall have it!" cried the generous Cecilia, "if the ſituation will make you happy, I will give it you myſelf."

The poor woman wept her thanks, and was long before ſhe could ſufficiently compoſe herſelf to anſwer the further queſtions of Cecilia, who next enquired what could be done with the children? Mrs. Hill, however, hitherto hopeleſs of ſuch a proviſion for herſelf, had for them formed no

plan. She told her, therefore, to go to her couſin, and conſult upon this ſubject, as well as to make preparations for her own removal.

The arrangement of this buſineſs now became her favourite occupation. She went herſelf to the ſhop, which was a very ſmall one in Fetter-lane, and ſpoke with Mrs. Roberts, the couſin; who agreed to take the eldeſt girl, now ſixteen years of age, by way of helper; but ſaid ſhe had room for no other: however, upon Cecilia's offering to raiſe the premium, ſhe conſented that the two little children ſhould alſo live in the houſe, where they might be under the care of their mother and ſiſter.

There were ſtill two others to be diſpoſed of; but as no immediate method of providing for them occurred to Cecilia, ſhe determined, for the preſent, to place them in ſome cheap ſchool, where they might be taught plain work, which could not but prove a uſeful qualification for whatever ſort of buſineſs they might hereafter attempt.

Her plan was to beſtow upon Mrs. Hill and her children 100*l.* by way of putting them all into a decent way of living; and then, from time to time, to make them ſuch ſmall preſents as their future exigencies or changes of ſituation might require.

Now, therefore, payment from Mr. Harrel

rel became immediately neceſſary, for ſhe had only 50*l.* of the 600*l.* ſhe had taken up in her own poſſeſſion, and her cuſtomary allowance was already ſo appropriated that ſhe could make from it no conſiderable deduction.

There is ſomething in the ſight of laborious indigence ſo affecting and ſo reſpectable, that it renders diſſipation peculiarly contemptible, and doubles the odium of extravagance: every time Cecilia ſaw this poor family, her averſion to the conduct and the principles of Mr. Harrel encreaſed, while her delicacy of ſhocking or ſhaming him diminiſhed, and ſhe ſoon acquired for them what ſhe had failed to acquire for herſelf, the ſpirit and reſolution to claim her debt.

One morning, therefore, as he was quitting the breakfaſt-room, ſhe haſtily aroſe, and following, begged to have a moment's diſcourſe with him. They went together to the library, and after ſome apologies, and much heſitation, ſhe told him ſhe fancied he had forgotten the 200*l.* which ſhe had lent him.

"The 200*l.*" cried he; "O, ay, true! —I proteſt it had eſcaped me. Well, but you don't want it immediately?

"Indeed I do, if you can conveniently ſpare it."

"O yes, certainly!—without the leaſt doubt!—Though now I think of it—its extremely unlucky, but really juſt at this time—why did not you put me in mind of it before?"

"I hoped you would have remembered it yourſelf."

"I could have paid you two days ago extremely well—however, you ſhall certainly have it very ſoon, that you may depend upon, and a day or two can make no great difference to you."

He then wiſhed her good morning, and left her.

Cecilia, very much provoked, regretted that ſhe had ever lent it at all, and determined for the future ſtrictly to follow the advice of Mr. Monckton in truſting him no more.

Two or three days paſſed on, but ſtill no notice was taken either of the payment or of the debt. She then reſolved to renew her application, and be more ſerious and more urgent with him; but ſhe found, to her utter ſurpriſe, this was not in her power, and that though ſhe lived under the ſame roof with him, ſhe had no opportunity to enforce her claim. Mr. Harrel, whenever ſhe deſired to ſpeak with him, proteſted he was ſo much hurried he had not a moment to ſpare: and even when,

tired

tired of his excuſes, ſhe purſued him out of the room, he only quickened his ſpeed, ſmiling, however, and bowing, and calling out "I am vaſtly ſorry, but I am ſo late now I cannot ſtop an inſtant; however, as ſoon as I come back, I ſhall be wholly at your command."

When he came back, however, Sir Robert Floyer, or ſome other gentleman, was ſure to be with him, and the difficulties of obtaining an audience were ſure to be encreaſed. And by this method, which he conſtantly practiſed, of avoiding any private converſation, he fruſtrated all her ſchemes of remonſtrating upon his delay, ſince her reſentment, however great, could never urge her to the indelicacy of dunning him in preſence of a third perſon.

She was now much perplext herſelf how to put into execution her plan for the Hills: ſhe knew it would be as vain to apply for money to Mr. Briggs, as for payment to Mr. Harrel. Her word, however, had been given, and her word ſhe held ſacred: ſhe reſolved, therefore, for the preſent, to beſtow upon them the 50*l.* ſhe ſtill retained, and, if the reſt ſhould be neceſſary before ſhe became of age, to ſpare it, however inconveniently, from her private allowance, which, by the will of her uncle, was 500*l.*

a year, 250*l.* of which Mr. Harrel received for her board and accommodations.

Having ſettled this matter in her own mind, ſhe went to the lodging of Mrs. Hill, in order to conclude the affair. She found her and all her children, except the youngeſt, hard at work, and their honeſt induſtry ſo much ſtrengthened her compaſſion, that her wiſhes for ſerving them grew every inſtant more liberal.

Mrs. Hill readily undertook to make her couſin accept half the premium for the preſent, which would ſuffice to fix her, with three of her children, in the ſhop: Cecilia then went with her to Fetter-lane, and there, drawing up herſelf an agreement for their entering into partnerſhip, ſhe made each of them ſign it and take a copy, and kept a third in her own poſſeſſion: after which, ſhe gave a promiſſory note to Mrs. Roberts for the reſt of the money.

She preſented Mrs. Hill, alſo, with 10*l.* to clothe them all decently, and enable her to ſend two of the children to ſchool; and aſſured her that ſhe would herſelf pay for their board and inſtruction, till ſhe ſhould be eſtabliſhed in her buſineſs, and have power to ſave money for that purpoſe.

She then put herſelf into a chair to return home, followed by the prayers and bleſſings of the whole family.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

An Adventure.

NEVER had the heart of Cecilia felt ſo light, ſo gay, ſo glowing as after the tranſaction of this affair: her life had never appeared to her ſo important, nor her wealth ſo valuable. To ſee five helpleſs children provided for by herſelf, reſcued from the extremes of penury and wretchedneſs, and put in a way to become uſeful to ſociety, and comfortable to themſelves; to behold their feeble mother, ſnatched from the hardſhip of that labour which, overpowering her ſtrength, had almoſt deſtroyed her exiſtence, now placed in a ſituation where a competent maintenance might be earned without fatigue, and the remnant of her days paſs in eaſy employment — to view ſuch ſights, and have power to ſay "*Theſe deeds are mine!*" what, to a diſpoſition fraught with tenderneſs and benevolence, could give purer ſelf-applauſe, or more exquiſite ſatisfaction?

Such were the pleaſures which regaled the reflections of Cecilia when, in her way

home, having got out of her chair to walk through the upper part of Oxford Street, ſhe was ſuddenly met by the old gentleman whoſe emphatical addreſſes to her had ſo much excited her aſtoniſhment.

He was paſſing quick on, but ſtopping the moment he perceived her, he ſternly called out "Are you proud? are you callous? are you hard of heart ſo ſoon?"

"Put me, if you pleaſe, to ſome trial!" cried Cecilia, with the virtuous courage of a ſelf-acquitting conſcience.

"I already have!" returned he, indignantly, "and already I have found you faulty!"

"I am ſorry to hear it," ſaid the amazed Cecilia, "but at leaſt I hope you will tell me in what?"

"You refuſed me admittance," he anſwered, "yet I was your friend, yet I was willing to prolong the term of your genuine tranquility! I pointed out to you a method of preſerving peace with your own ſoul; I came to you in behalf of the poor, and inſtructed you how to merit their prayers; you heard me, you were ſuſceptible, you complied! I meant to have repeated the leſſon, to have tuned your whole heart to compaſſion, and to have taught you the ſad duties of ſympathiſing humanity. For this

this purpoſe I called again, but again I was not admitted! Short was the period of my abſence, yet long enough for the completion of your downfall!"

"Good heaven," cried Cecilia, "how dreadful is this language! when have you called, Sir? I never heard you had been at the houſe. Far from refuſing you admittance, I wiſhed to ſee you."

"Indeed?" cried he, with ſome ſoftneſs, "and are you, in truth, not proud? not callous? not hard of heart? Follow me, then, and viſit the humble and the poor, follow me, and give comfort to the fallen and dejected!"

At this invitation, however deſirous to do good, Cecilia ſtarted; the ſtrangeneſs of the inviter, his flightineſs, his authoritative manner, and the uncertainty whither or to whom he might carry her, made her fearful of proceeding: yet a benevolent curioſity to ſee as well as ſerve the objects of his recommendation, joined to the eagerneſs of youthful integrity to clear her own character from the aſperſion of hard-heartedneſs, ſoon conquered her irreſolution, and, making a ſign to her ſervant to keep near her, ſhe followed as her conductor led.

He went on ſilently and ſolemnly till he came to Swallow-ſtreet, then turning into it, he ſtopt at a ſmall and mean-looking

house, knocked at the door, and without asking any question of the man who opened it, beckoned her to come after him, and hastened up some narrow winding stairs.

Cecilia again hesitated; but when she recollected that this old man, though little known, was frequently seen, and though with few people acquainted, was by many personally recognized, she thought it impossible he could mean her any injury. She ordered her servant, however, to come in, and bid him keep walking up and down the stairs till she returned to him. And then she obeyed the directions of her guide.

He proceeded till he came to the second floor, then, again beckoning her to follow him, he opened a door, and entered a small and very meanly furnished apartment.

And here, to her infinite astonishment, she perceived, employed in washing some china, a very lovely young woman, genteely dressed, and appearing hardly seventeen years of age.

The moment they came in, with evident marks of confusion, she instantly gave over her work, hastily putting the bason she was washing upon the table, and endeavouring to hide the towel with which she was wiping it behind her chair.

The old gentleman, advancing to her with

with quickneſs, ſaid, "How is he now? Is he better? will he live?"

"Heaven forbid he ſhould not!" anſwered the young woman with emotion, "but, indeed, he is no better!"

"Look here," ſaid he, pointing to Cecilia, "I have brought you one who has power to ſerve you, and to relieve your diſtreſs: one who is rolling in affluence, a ſtranger to ill, a novice in the world;—unſkilled in the miſeries ſhe is yet to endure, unconſcious of the depravity into which ſhe is to ſink! receive her benefactions while yet ſhe is untainted, ſatisfied that while ſhe aids you, ſhe is bleſſing herſelf!"

The young woman, bluſhing and abaſhed, ſaid, "You are very good to me, Sir, but there is no occaſion—there is no need—I have not any neceſſity—I am far from being ſo very much in want.—"

"Poor ſimple ſoul!" interrupted the old man, "and art thou aſhamed of poverty? Guard, guard thyſelf from other ſhames, and the wealthieſt may envy thee! Tell here thy ſtory, plainly, roundly, truly; abate nothing of thy indigence, repreſs nothing of her liberality. The Poor not impoveriſhed by their own Guilt, are Equals of the Affluent, not enriched by their own Virtue. Come, then, and let

me

me preſent ye to each other! young as ye both are, with many years and many ſorrows to encounter, lighten the burthen of each other's cares, by the heart-ſoothing exchange of gratitude for beneficence!"

He then took a hand of each, and joining them between his own, "*You*," he continued, "who though rich, are not hardened, and *you*, who though poor, are not debaſed, why ſhould ye not love, why ſhould ye not cheriſh each other? The afflictions of life are tedious, its joys are evaneſcent; ye are now both young, and, with little to enjoy, will find much to ſuffer. Ye are both, too, I believe, innocent—Oh could ye always remain ſo!—— Cherubs were ye then, and the ſons of men might worſhip you!"

He ſtopt, checked by his own riſing emotion; but ſoon reſuming his uſual auſterity, "Such, however," he continued, "is not the condition of humanity; in pity, therefore, to the evils impending over both, be kind to each other! I leave you together, and to your mutual tenderneſs I recommend you!"

Then, turning particularly to Cecilia, "Diſdain not," he ſaid, "to conſole the depreſſed; look upon her without ſcorn, converſe with her without contempt: like you, ſhe is an orphan, though not like you,

an

an heireſs;—like her, you are fatherleſs, though not like her friendleſs! If ſhe is awaited by the temptations of adverſity, you, alſo, are ſurrounded by the corruptions of proſperity. Your fall is moſt probable, her's moſt excuſable;—commiſerate *her* therefore now,—by and by ſhe may commiſerate *you!*"

And with theſe words he left the room.

A total ſilence for ſome time ſucceeded his departure: Cecilia found it difficult to recover from the ſurpriſe into which ſhe had been thrown ſufficiently for ſpeech: in following her extraordinary director, her imagination had painted to her a ſcene ſuch as ſhe had ſo lately quitted, and prepared her to behold ſome family in diſtreſs, ſome helpleſs creature in ſickneſs, or ſome children in want; but of theſe to ſee none, to meet but one perſon, and that one fair, young, and delicate,—an introduction ſo ſingular to an object ſo unthought of, deprived her of all power but that of ſhewing her amazement.

Mean while the young woman looked ſcarcely leſs ſurpriſed, and infinitely more embarraſſed. She ſurveyed her apartment with vexation, and her gueſt with confuſion; ſhe had liſtened to the exhortation of the old man with viſible uneaſineſs, and

now

now he was gone, ſeemed overwhelmed with ſhame and chagrin.

Cecilia, who in obſerving theſe emotions felt both her curioſity and her compaſſion encreaſe, preſſed her hand as ſhe parted with it, and, when a little recovered, ſaid, "You muſt think this a ſtrange intruſion; but the gentleman who brought me hither is perhaps ſo well known to you, as to make his ſingularities plead with you their own apology."

"No, indeed, madam," ſhe anſwered, baſhfully, "he is very little known to me; but he is very good, and very deſirous to do me ſervice:—not but what I believe he thinks me much worſe off than I really am, for, I aſſure you, madam, whatever he has ſaid, I am not ill off at all—hardly."

The various doubts to her diſadvantage which had at firſt, from her uncommon ſituation, ariſen in the mind of Cecilia, this anxiety to diſguiſe, not diſplay her diſtreſs, conſiderably removed, ſince it cleared her of all ſuſpicion of ſeeking by artifice and impoſition to play upon her feelings.

With a gentleneſs, therefore, the moſt ſoothing, ſhe replied, "I ſhould by no means have broken in upon you thus unexpectedly, if I had not concluded my conductor had ſome right to bring me. However,

ever, since we are actually met, let us remember his injunctions, and endeavour not to part till, by a mutual exchange of good-will, each has added a friend to the other."

"You are condescending indeed, madam," answered the young woman, with an air the most humble, "looking as you look, to talk of a friend when you come to such a place as this! up two pair of stairs! no furniture! no servant! every thing in such disorder!—indeed I wonder at Mr. Albany! he should not——but he thinks every body's affairs may be made public, and does not care what he tells, nor who hears him;—he knows not the pain he gives, nor the mischief he may do."

"I am very much concerned," cried Cecilia, more and more surprised at all she heard, "to find I have been thus instrumental to distressing you. I was ignorant whither I was coming, and followed him, believe me, neither from curiosity nor inclination, but simply because I knew not how to refuse him. He is gone, however, and I will therefore relieve you by going too: but permit me to leave behind me a small testimony that the intention of my coming was not mere impertinence."

She then took out her purse; but the young woman, starting back with a look

of

of reſentful mortification, exclaimed, "No, madam! you are quite miſtaken; pray put up your purſe; I am no beggar! Mr. Albany has miſrepreſented me, if he has told you I am."

Cecilia, mortified in her turn at this unexpected rejection of an offer ſhe had thought herſelf invited to make, ſtood ſome moments ſilent; and then ſaid, "I am far from meaning to offend you, and I ſincerely beg your pardon if I have miſunderſtood the charge juſt now given to me."

"I have nothing to pardon, madam," ſaid ſhe, more calmly, "except, indeed, to Mr. Albany; and to him, 'tis of no uſe to be angry, for he minds not what I ſay! he is very good, but he is very ſtrange, for he thinks the whole world made to live in common, and that every one who is poor ſhould aſk, and every one who is rich ſhould give: he does not know that there are many who would rather ſtarve."

"And are you," ſaid Cecilia, half-ſmiling, "of that number?"

"No, indeed, madam! I have not ſo much greatneſs of mind. But thoſe to whom I belong have more fortitude and higher ſpirit. I wiſh I could imitate them!"

Struck with the candour and ſimplicity of this ſpeech, Cecilia now felt a warm deſire

desire to serve her, and taking her hand, said, "Forgive me, but though I see you wish me gone, I know not how to leave you: recollect, therefore, the charge that has been given to us both, and if you refuse my assistance one way, point out to me in what other I may offer it."

"You are very kind, madam," she answered, "and I dare say you are very good; I am sure you look so, at least. But I want nothing; I do very well, and I have hopes of doing better. Mr. Albany is too impatient. He knows, indeed, that I am not extremely rich, but he is much to blame if he supposes me therefore an object of charity, and thinks me so mean as to receive money from a stranger."

"I am truly sorry," cried Cecilia, "for the error I have committed, but you must suffer me to make my peace with you before we part: yet, till I am better known to you, I am fearful of proposing terms. Perhaps you will permit me to leave you my direction, and do me the favour to call upon me yourself?"

"O no, madam! I have a sick relation whom I cannot leave: and indeed, if he were well, he would not like to have me make an acquaintance while I am in this place."

"I hope you are not his only nurse?

I am

I am ſure you do not look able to bear ſuch fatigue. Has he a phyſician? Is he properly attended?"

"No, madam; he has no phyſician, and no attendance at all!"

"And is it poſſible that in ſuch a ſituation you can refuſe to be aſſiſted? Surely you ſhould accept ſome help for him, if not for yourſelf."

"But what will that ſignify when, if I do, he will not make uſe of it? and when he had a thouſand and a thouſand times rather die, than let any one know he is in want?"

"Take it, then, unknown to him; ſerve him without acquainting him you ſerve him. Surely you would not ſuffer him to periſh without aid?"

"Heaven forbid! But what can I do? I am under his command, madam, not he under mine!"

"Is he your father?——Pardon my queſtion, but your youth ſeems much to want ſuch a protector."

"No, madam, I have no father! I was happier when I had! He is my brother."

"And what is his illneſs?"

"A fever."

"A fever, and without a phyſician! Are you ſure, too, it is not infectious?"

"O yes, too ſure!"

"Too

"Too ſure? how ſo?"

"Becauſe I know too well the occaſion of it!"

"And what is the occaſion?" cried Cecilia, again taking her hand, "pray truſt me; indeed you ſhall not repent your confidence. Your reſerve hitherto has only raiſed you in my eſteem, but do not carry it ſo far as to mortify me by a total rejection of my good offices."

"Ah madam!" ſaid the young woman, ſighing, "you ought to be good, I am ſure, for you will draw all out of me by ſuch kindneſs as this! the occaſion was a neglected wound, never properly healed."

"A wound? is he in the army?"

"No,—he was ſhot through the ſide in a duel."

"In a duel?" exclaimed Cecilia, "pray what is his name?"

"O that I muſt not tell you! his name is a great ſecret now, while he is in this poor place, for I know he had almoſt rather never ſee the light again than have it known."

"Surely, ſurely," cried Cecilia, with much emotion, "he cannot——I hope he cannot be Mr. Belfield?"

"Ah Heaven!" cried the young woman, ſcreaming, "do you then know him?"

Here,

Here, in mutual aſtoniſhment, they looked at each other.

"You are then," ſaid Cecilia, "the ſiſter of Mr. Belfield? And Mr. Belfield is thus ſick, his wound is not yet healed,—and he is without any help!"

"And who, madam, are *you?*" cried ſhe, "and how is it you know him?"

"My name is Beverley."

"Ah!" exclaimed ſhe again, "I fear I have done nothing but miſchief! I know very well who you are now, madam, but if my brother diſcovers that I have betrayed him, he will take it very unkind, and perhaps never forgive me."

"Be not alarmed," cried Cecilia; "reſt aſſured he ſhall never know it. Is he not now in the country?"

"No, madam, he is now in the very next room."

"But what is become of the ſurgeon who uſed to attend him, and why does he not ſtill viſit him?"

"It is in vain, now, to hide any thing from you; my brother deceived him, and ſaid he was going out of town merely to get rid of him."

"And what could induce him to act ſo ſtrangely?"

"A reaſon which you, madam, I hope, will never know, Poverty!—he would not run up a bill he could not pay."

"Good

"Good Heaven!—But what can be done for him? He muſt not be ſuffered to linger thus; we muſt contrive ſome method of relieving and aſſiſting him, whether he will conſent or not."

"I fear that will not be poſſible. One of his friends has already found him out, and has written him the kindeſt letter! but he would not anſwer it, and would not ſee him, and was only fretted and angry."

"Well," ſaid Cecilia, "I will not keep you longer, leſt he ſhould be alarmed by your abſence. To-morrow morning, with your leave, I will call upon you again, and then, I hope, you will permit me to make ſome effort to aſſiſt you."

"If it only depended upon me, madam," ſhe anſwered, "now I have the honour to know who you are, I believe I ſhould not make much ſcruple, for I was not brought up to notions ſo high as my brother. Ah! happy had it been for him, for me, for all his family, if he had not had them neither!"

Cecilia then repeated her expreſſions of comfort and kindneſs, and took her leave.

This little adventure gave her infinite concern; all the horror which the duel had originally occaſioned her, again returned; ſhe accuſed herſelf with much bitterneſs for having brought it on; and finding that Mr.

Mr. Belfield was so cruelly a sufferer both in his health and his affairs, she thought it incumbent upon her to relieve him to the utmost of her ability.

His sister, too, had extremely interested her; her youth, and the uncommon artlessness of her conversation, added to her melancholy situation, and the loveliness of her person, excited in her a desire to serve, and an inclination to love her; and she determined, if she found her as deserving as she seemed engaging, not only to assist her at present, but, if her distresses continued, to receive her into her own house in future.

Again she regretted the undue detention of her 200*l*. What she now had to spare was extremely inadequate to what she now wished to bestow, and she looked forward to the conclusion of her minority with encreasing eagerness. The generous and elegant plan of life she then intended to pursue, daily gained ground in her imagination, and credit in her opinion.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

A MAN OF GENIUS.

THE next morning, as ſoon as breakfaſt was over, Cecilia went in a chair to Swallow-ſtreet; ſhe enquired for Miſs Belfield, and was told to go up ſtairs: but what was her amazement to meet, juſt coming out of the room into which ſhe was entering, young Delvile!

They both ſtarted, and Cecilia, from the ſeeming ſtrangeneſs of her ſituation, felt a confuſion with which ſhe had hitherto been unacquainted. But Delvile, preſently recovering from his ſurpriſe, ſaid to her, with an expreſſive ſmile, "How good is Miſs Beverley thus to viſit the ſick! and how much better might I have had the pleaſure of ſeeing Mr. Belfield, had I but, by preſcience, known her deſign, and deferred my own enquiries till he had been revived by hers!"

And then, bowing and wiſhing her good morning, he glided paſt her.

Cecilia, notwithſtanding the openneſs and purity of her intentions, was ſo much diſconcerted by this unexpected meeting, and

pointed ſpeech, that ſhe had not the preſence of mind to call him back and clear herſelf: and the various interrogatories and railleries which had already paſſed between them upon the ſubject of Mr. Belfield, made her ſuppoſe that what he had formerly ſuſpected he would now think confirmed, and conclude that all her aſſertions of indifference, proceeded merely from that readineſs at hypocriſy upon particular ſubjects, of which he had openly accuſed her whole Sex.

This circumſtance and this apprehenſion took from her for a while all intereſt in the errand upon which ſhe came; but the benevolence of her heart ſoon brought it back, when, upon going into the room, ſhe ſaw her new favourite in tears.

"What is the matter?" cried ſhe, tenderly; "no new affliction I hope has happened? Your brother is not worſe?"

"No, madam, he is much the ſame; I was not then crying for him."

"For what then? tell me, acquaint me with your ſorrows, and aſſure yourſelf you tell them to a friend."

"I was crying, madam, to find ſo much goodneſs in the world, when I thought there was ſo little! to find I have ſome chance of being again happy, when I thought I was miſerable for ever! Two whole years have

have I ſpent in nothing but unhappineſs, and I thought there was nothing elſe to be had; but yeſterday, madam, brought me *you*, with every promiſe of nobleneſs and protection; and to-day, a friend of my brother's has behaved ſo generouſly, that even my brother has liſtened to him, and almoſt conſented to be obliged to him!"

"And have you already known ſo much ſorrow," ſaid Cecilia, "that this little dawn of proſperity ſhould wholly overpower your ſpirits? Gentle, amiable girl! may the future recompence you for the paſt, and may Mr. Albany's kind wiſhes be fulfilled in the reciprocation of our comfort and affection!"

They then entered into a converſation which the ſweetneſs of Cecilia, and the gratitude of Miſs Belfield, ſoon rendered intereſting, friendly and unreſerved: and in a very ſhort time, whatever was eſſential in the ſtory or ſituation of the latter was fully communicated. She gave, however, a charge the moſt earneſt, that her brother ſhould never be acquainted with the confidence ſhe had made.

Her father, who had been dead only two years, was a linen-draper in the city; he had ſix daughters, of whom herſelf was the youngeſt, and only one ſon. This ſon, Mr. Belfield, was alike the darling of his

father, mother, and ſiſters: he was brought up at Eaton, no expence was ſpared in his education, nothing was denied that could make him happy. With an excellent underſtanding he had uncommon quickneſs of parts, and his progreſs in his ſtudies was rapid and honourable: his father, though he always meant him for his ſucceſſor in his buſineſs, heard of his improvement with rapture, often ſaying, "My boy will be the ornament of the city, he will be the beſt ſcholar in any ſhop in London."

He was ſoon, however, taught another leſſon; when, at the age of ſixteen, he returned home, and was placed in the ſhop, inſtead of applying his talents, as his father had expected, to trade, he both deſpiſed and abhorred the name of it; when ſerious, treating it with contempt, when gay, with deriſion.

He was ſeized, alſo, with a moſt ardent deſire to finiſh his education, like thoſe of his ſchool-fellows who left Eaton at the ſame time, at one of the Univerſities; and, after many difficulties, this petition, at the interceſſion of his mother, was granted, old Mr. Belfield telling him he hoped a little more learning would give him a little more ſenſe, and that when he became a *finiſhed ſtudent*, he would not only know the true value of buſineſs, but underſtand how

to

to get money, and make a bargain, better than any man whatſoever within Temple-Bar.

Theſe expectations, equally ſhort-ſighted, were alſo equally fallacious with the former: the ſon again returned, and returned, as his father had hoped, a *finiſhed ſtudent*; but, far from being more tractable, or better diſpoſed for application to trade, his averſion to it now was more ſtubborn, and his oppoſition more hardy than ever. The young men of faſhion with whom he had formed friendſhips at ſchool, or at the univerſity, and with whom, from the indulgence of his father, he was always able to vie in expence, and from the indulgence of Nature to excel in capacity, earneſtly ſought the continuance of his acquaintance, and courted and coveted the pleaſure of his converſation: but though he was now totally diſqualified for any other ſociety, he loſt all delight in their favour from the fear they ſhould diſcover his abode, and ſedulouſly endeavoured to avoid even occaſionally meeting them, leſt any of his family ſhould at the ſame time approach him: for of his family, though wealthy, worthy and independent, he was now ſo utterly aſhamed, that the mortification the moſt cruel he could receive, was to be aſked his addreſs, or told he ſhould be viſited.

Tired, at length, of evading the enquiries made by ſome, and forcing faint laughs at the detection made by others, he privately took a lodging at the Weſt end of the town, to which he thence forward directed all his friends, and where, under various pretences, he contrived to ſpend the greateſt part of his time.

In all his expenſive deceits and frolics, his mother was his never-failing confident and aſſiſtant; for when ſhe heard that the companions of her ſon were men of faſhion, ſome born to titles, others deſtined to high ſtations, ſhe concluded he was in the certain road to honour and profit, and frequently diſtreſſed herſelf, without ever repining, in order to enable him to preſerve upon equal terms, connections which ſhe believed ſo conducive to his future grandeur.

In this wild and unſettled manner he paſſed ſome time, ſtruggling inceſſantly againſt the authority of his father, privately abetted by his mother, and conſtantly aided and admired by his ſiſters: till, ſick of ſo deſultory a way of life, he entered himſelf a volunteer in the army.

How ſoon he grew tired of this change has already been related, * as well as his re-

* See p. 15, 16. Vol. I.

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conciliation with his father, and his becoming a ſtudent at the Temple: for the father now grew as weary of oppoſing, as the young man of being oppoſed.

Here, for two or three years, he lived in happineſs uninterrupted; he extended his acquaintance among the great, by whom he was no ſooner known than careſſed and admired, and he frequently viſited his family, which, though he bluſhed to own in public, he affectionately loved in private. His profeſſion, indeed, was but little in his thoughts, ſucceſſive engagements occupying almoſt all his hours. Delighted with the favour of the world, and charmed to find his preſence ſeemed the ſignal for entertainment, he ſoon forgot the uncertainty of his fortune, and the inferiority of his rank; the law grew more and more fatiguing, pleaſure became more and more alluring, and, by degrees, he had not a day unappropriated to ſome party or amuſement; voluntarily conſigning the few leiſure moments his gay circle afforded him, to the indulgence of his fancy in ſome haſty compoſitions in verſe, which were handed about in manuſcript, and which contributed to keep him in faſhion.

Such was his ſituation at the death of his father; a new ſcene was then opened to

him, and for ſome time he heſitated what courſe to purſue.

Old Mr. Belfield, though he lived in great affluence, left not behind him any conſiderable fortune, after the portions of his daughters, to each of whom he bequeathed 2000*l.* had been deducted from it. But his ſtock in trade was great, and his buſineſs was proſperous and lucrative.

His ſon, however, did not merely want application and fortitude to become his ſucceſſor, but ſkill and knowledge; his deliberation, therefore, was haſty, and his reſolution improvident; he determined to continue at the Temple himſelf, while the ſhop, which he could by no means afford to relinquiſh, ſhould be kept up by another name, and the buſineſs of it be tranſacted by an agent; hoping thus to ſecure and enjoy its emoluments, without either the trouble or the humiliation of attendance.

But this ſcheme, like moſt others that have their baſis in vanity, ended in nothing but mortification and diſappointment: the ſhop which under old Mr. Belfield had been flouriſhing and ſucceſsful, and enriched himſelf and all his family, could now ſcarce ſupport the expences of an individual. Without a maſter, without that diligent attention to its proſperity which the intereſt

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of poſſeſſion alone can give, and the authority of a principal alone can enforce, it quickly loſt its fame for the excellence of its goods, and ſoon after its cuſtomers from the report of its declenſion. The produce, therefore, diminiſhed every month; he was ſurpriſed, he was provoked; he was convinced he was cheated, and that his affairs were neglected; but though he threatened from time to time to enquire into the real ſtate of the buſineſs, and inveſtigate the cauſe of its decay, he felt himſelf inadequate to the taſk; and now firſt lamented that early contempt of trade, which by preventing him acquiring ſome knowledge of it while he had youth and opportunity, made him now ignorant what redreſs to ſeek, though certain of impoſition and injury.

But yet, however diſturbed by alarming ſuggeſtions in his hours of retirement, no alteration was made in the general courſe of his life; he was ſtill the darling of his friends, and the leader in all parties, and ſtill, though his income was leſſened, his expences encreaſed.

Such were his circumſtances at the time Cecilia firſt ſaw him at the houſe of Mr. Monckton: from which, two days after her arrival in town, he was himſelf ſummoned, by an information that his agent had ſuddenly left the kingdom.

The fatal conſequence of this fraudulent elopement was immediate bankrupcy.

His ſpirits, however, did not yet fail him; as he had never been the nominal maſter of the ſhop, he eſcaped all diſhonour from its ruin, and was ſatisfied to conſign what remained to the mercy of the creditors, ſo that his own name ſhould not appear in the Gazette.

Three of his ſiſters were already extremely well married to reputable tradeſmen; the two elder of thoſe who were yet ſingle were ſettled with two of thoſe who were married, and Henrietta, the youngeſt, reſided with her mother, who had a comfortable annuity, and a ſmall houſe at Padington.

Bereft thus through vanity and imprudence of all the long labours of his father, he was now compelled to think ſeriouſly of ſome actual method of maintenance; ſince his mother, though willing to ſacrifice to him even the nouriſhment which ſuſtained her, could do for him but little, and that little he had too much juſtice to accept. The law, even to the moſt diligent and ſucceſsful, is extremely ſlow of profit, and whatever, from his connections and abilities might be hoped hereafter, at preſent required an expence which he was no longer able to ſupport.

It remained then to try his influence with his

his friends among the great and the powerful.

His canvaſs proved extremely honourable; every one promiſed ſomething, and all ſeemed delighted to have an opportunity of ſerving him.

Pleaſed with finding the world ſo much better than report had made it, he now ſaw the concluſion of his difficulties in the proſpect of a place at court.

Belfield, with half the penetration with which he was gifted, would have ſeen in any other man the deluſive idleneſs of expectations no better founded; but though diſcernment teaches us the folly of others, experience ſingly can teach us our own! he flattered himſelf that his friends had been more wiſely ſelected than the friends of thoſe who in ſimilar circumſtances had been beguiled, and he ſuſpected not the fraud of his vanity, till he found his invitations daily ſlacken, and that his time was at his own command.

All his hopes now reſted upon one friend and patron, Mr. Floyer, an uncle of Sir Robert Floyer, a man of power in the royal houſhold, with whom he had lived in great intimacy, and who at this period had the diſpoſal of a place which he ſolicited. The only obſtacle that ſeemed in his way was from Sir Robert himſelf, who

warmly exerted his intereſt in favour of a friend of his own. Mr. Floyer, however, aſſured Belfield of the preference, and only begged his patience till he could find ſome opportunity of appeaſing his nephew.

And this was the ſtate of his affairs at the time of his quarrel at the Opera-houſe. Already declared opponents of each other, Sir Robert felt double wrath that for *him* Cecilia ſhould reject his civilities; while Belfield, ſuſpecting he preſumed upon his known dependence on his uncle to affront him, felt alſo double indignation at the haughtineſs of his behaviour. And thus, ſlight as ſeemed to the world the cauſe of their conteſt, each had private motives of animoſity that ſerved to ſtimulate revenge.

The very day after this duel, Mr. Floyer wrote him word that he was now obliged in common decency to take the part of his nephew, and therefore had already given the place to the friend he had recommended.

This was the termination of his hopes, and the ſignal of his ruin! To the pain of his wound he became inſenſible, from the ſuperior pain of this unexpected miſcarriage; yet his pride ſtill enabled him to diſguiſe his diſtreſs, and to ſee all the friends whom this accident induced to ſeek him, while from the ſprightlineſs he forced

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in order to conceal his anguiſh, he appeared to them more lively and more entertaining than ever.

But theſe efforts, when left to himſelf and to nature, only ſunk him the deeper in ſadneſs; he found an immediate change in his way of life was neceſſary, yet could not brook to make it in ſight of thoſe with whom he had ſo long lived in all the brilliancy of equality. A high principle of honour which ſtill, in the midſt of his gay career, had remained uncorrupted, had ſcrupulouſly guarded him from running in debt, and therefore, though of little poſſeſſed, that little was ſtrictly his own. He now publiſhed that he was going out of town for the benefit of purer air, diſcharged his ſurgeon, took a gay leave of his friends, and truſting no one with his ſecret but his ſervant, was privately conveyed to mean and cheap lodgings in Swallow-ſtreet.

Here, ſhut up from every human being he had formerly known, he purpoſed to remain till he grew better, and then again to ſeek his fortune in the army.

His preſent ſituation, however, was little calculated to contribute to his recovery; the diſmiſſion of the ſurgeon, the precipitation of his removal, the inconveniencies of his lodgings, and the unſeaſonable deprivation of long cuſtomary indulgencies, were

were unavoidable delays of his amendment; while the mortification of his preſent diſgrace, and the bitterneſs of his late diſappointment, preyed inceſſantly upon his mind, robbed him of reſt, heightened his fever, and reduced him by degrees to a ſtate ſo low and dangerous, that his ſervant, alarmed for his life, ſecretly acquainted his mother with his illneſs and retreat.

The mother, almoſt diſtracted by this intelligence, inſtantly, with her daughter, flew to his lodgings. She wiſhed to have taken him immediately to her houſe at Padington, but he had ſuffered ſo much from his firſt removal, that he would not conſent to another. She would then have called in a phyſician, but he refuſed even to ſee one; and ſhe had too long given way to all his deſires and opinions, to have now the force of mind for exerting the requiſite authority of iſſuing her orders without conſulting him.

She begged, ſhe pleaded, indeed, and Henrietta joined in her entreaties; but ſickneſs and vexation had not rendered him tame, though they had made him ſullen: he reſiſted their prayers, and commonly ſilenced them by aſſurances that their oppoſition to the plan he had determined to purſue,

ſue, only inflamed his fever, and retarded his recovery.

The motive of an obduracy ſo cruel to his friends was the fear of a detection which he thought not merely prejudicial to his affairs, but diſhonourable to his character: for, without betraying any ſymptom of his diſtreſs, he had taken a general leave of his acquaintance upon pretence of going out of town, and he could ill endure to make a diſcovery which would at once proclaim his degradation and his deceit.

Mr. Albany had accidentally broken in upon him, by miſtaking his room for that of another ſick perſon in the ſame houſe, to whom his viſit had been intended; but as he knew and reverenced that old gentleman, he did not much repine at his intruſion.

He was not ſo eaſy when the ſame diſcovery was made by young Delvile, who, chancing to meet his ſervant in the ſtreet, enquired concerning his maſter's health, and ſurpriſing from him its real ſtate, followed him home; where, ſoon certain of the change in his affairs by the change of his habitation, he wrote him a letter, in which, after apologizing for his freedom, he warmly declared that nothing could make him ſo happy as being favoured with his commands, if, either through himſelf

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or his friends, he could be ſo fortunate as to do him any ſervice.

Belfield, deeply mortified at this detection of his ſituation, returned only a verbal anſwer of cold thanks, and deſired he would not ſpeak of his being in town, as he was not well enough to be ſeen.

This reply gave almoſt equal mortification to young Delvile, who continued, however, to call at the door with enquiries how he went on, though he made no further attempt to ſee him.

Belfield, ſoftened at length by the kindneſs of this conduct, determined to admit him; and he was juſt come from paying his firſt viſit, when he was met by Cecilia upon the ſtairs.

His ſtay with him had been ſhort, and he had taken no notice either of his change of abode, or his pretence of going into the country; he had talked to him only in general terms, and upon general ſubjects, till he aroſe to depart, and then he re-urged his offers of ſervice with ſo much openneſs and warmth, that Belfield, affected by his earneſtneſs, promiſed he would ſoon ſee him again, and intimated to his delighted mother and ſiſter, that he would frankly conſult with him upon his affairs.

Such was the tale which, with various minuter

minuter circumſtances, Miſs Belfield communicated to Cecilia. "My mother," ſhe added, "who never quits him, knows that you are here, madam, for ſhe heard me talking with ſomebody yeſterday, and ſhe made me tell her all that had paſſed, and that you ſaid you would come again this morning."

Cecilia returned many acknowledgments for this artleſs and unreſerved communication, but could not, when it was over, forbear enquiring by what early miſery ſhe had already, though ſo very young, ſpent *two years in nothing but unhappineſs?*

"Becauſe," ſhe anſwered, "when my poor father died all our family ſeparated, and I left every body to go and live with my mother at Padington; and I was never a favourite with my mother—no more, indeed, was any body but my brother, for ſhe thinks all the reſt of the world only made for his ſake. So ſhe uſed to deny both herſelf and me almoſt common neceſſaries, in order to ſave up money to make him preſents; though, if he had known how it was done, he would only have been angry inſtead of taking them. However, I ſhould have regarded nothing that had but been for his benefit, for I loved him a great deal more than my own convenience; but ſums that would diſtreſs us for months to ſave

up,

up, would by him be ſpent in a day, and then thought of no more! Nor was that all ——O no! I had much greater uneaſineſs to ſuffer; for I was informed by one of my brother's-in-law how ill every thing went, and that certain ruin would come to my poor brother from the treachery of his agent; and the thought of this was always preying upon my mind, for I did not dare tell it my mother, for fear it ſhould put her out of humour, for, ſometimes, ſhe is not very patient; and it mattered little what any of us ſaid to my brother, for he was too gay and too confident to believe his danger."

"Well but," ſaid Cecilia, "I hope, now, all will go better; if your brother will conſent to ſee a phyſician——"

"Ah, madam! that is the thing I fear he never will do, becauſe of being ſeen in theſe bad lodgings. I would kneel whole days to prevail with him, but he is unuſed to controul, and knows not how to ſubmit to it; and he has lived ſo long among the great, that he forgets he was not born as high as themſelves. Oh that he had never quitted his own family! If he had not been ſpoilt by ambition, he had the beſt heart and ſweeteſt diſpoſition in the world. But living always with his ſuperiors, taught him to diſdain his own relations, and be aſhamed of

of us all; and yet now, in the hour of his diſtreſs——who elſe comes to help him?"

Cecilia then enquired if ſhe wanted not aſſiſtance for herſelf and her mother, obſerving that they did not ſeem to have all the conveniencies to which they were entitled.

"Why indeed, madam," ſhe replied, with an ingenuous ſmile, "when you firſt came here I was a little like my brother, for I was ſadly aſhamed to let you ſee how ill we lived! but now you know the worſt, ſo I ſhall fret about it no more."

"But this cannot be your uſual way of life; I fear the misfortunes of Mr. Belfield have ſpread a ruin wider than his own."

"No indeed; he took care from the firſt not to involve us in his hazards, for he is very generous, madam, and very noble in all his notions, and could behave to us all no better about money matters than he has ever done. But from the moment we came to this diſmal place, and ſaw his diſtreſs, and that he was ſunk ſo low who uſed always to be higher than any of us, we had a ſad ſcene indeed! My poor mother, whoſe whole delight was to think that he lived like a nobleman, and who always flattered herſelf that he would riſe to be as great as the company he kept, was ſo diſtracted with her diſappointment, that ſhe would not liſten

liſten to reaſon, but immediately diſcharged both our ſervants, ſaid ſhe and I ſhould do all the work ourſelves, hired this poor room for us to live in, and ſent to order a bill to be put upon her houſe at Padington, for ſhe ſaid ſhe would never return to it any more."

"But are you, then," cried Cecilia, "without any ſervant?"

"We have my brother's man, madam, and ſo he lights our fires, and takes away ſome of our litters; and there is not much elſe to be done, except ſweeping the rooms, for we eat nothing but cold meat from the cook ſhops."

"And how long is this to laſt?"

"Indeed I cannot tell; for the real truth is, my poor mother has almoſt loſt her ſenſes; and ever ſince our coming here, ſhe has been ſo miſerable and ſo complaining, that indeed, between her and my brother, I have almoſt loſt mine too! For when ſhe found all her hopes at an end, and that her darling ſon, inſtead of being rich and powerful, and ſurrounded by friends and admirers, all trying who ſhould do the moſt for him, was ſhut up by himſelf in this poor little lodging, and inſtead of gaining more, had ſpent all he was worth at firſt, with not a creature to come near him, though ill, though confined, though keeping

ing his bed!—Oh madam, had you ſeen my poor mother when ſhe firſt caſt her eyes upon him in that condition!—indeed you could never have forgotten it!"

"I wonder not at her diſappointment," cried Cecilia; "with expectations ſo ſanguine, and a ſon of ſo much merit, it might well indeed be bitter."

"Yes, and beſides the diſappointment, ſhe is now continually reproaching herſelf for always complying with his humours, and aſſiſting him to appear better than the reſt of his family, though my father never approved her doing ſo. But ſhe thought herſelf ſo ſure of his riſing, that ſhe believed we ſhould all thank her for it in the end. And ſhe always uſed to ſay that he was born to be a gentleman, and what a grievous thing it would be to have him made a tradeſman."

"I hope, at leaſt, ſhe has not the additional miſery of ſeeing him ungrateful for her fondneſs, however injudicious it may have been?"

"O no! he does nothing but comfort and chear her! and indeed it is very good of him, for he has owned to me in private, that but for her encouragement, he could not have run the courſe he has run, for he ſhould have been obliged to enter into buſineſs, whether he had liked it or not. But

my

my poor mother knows this, though he will not tell it her, and therefore she says that unless he gets well, she will punish herself all the rest of her life, and never go back to her house, and never hire another servant, and never eat any thing but bread, nor drink any thing but water!"

"Poor unhappy woman!" cried Cecilia, "how dearly does she pay for her imprudent and short-sighted indulgence! but surely you are not also to suffer in the same manner?"

"No, madam, not by her fault, for she wants me to go and live with one of my sisters: but I would not quit her for the world; I should think myself wicked indeed to leave her now. Besides, I don't at all repine at the little hardships I go through at present, because my poor brother is in so much distress, that all we save may be really turned to account; but when we lived so hardly only to procure him luxuries he had no right to, I must own I used often to think it unfair, and if I had not loved him dearly, I should not have borne it so well, perhaps, as I ought."

Cecilia now began to think it high time to release her new acquaintance by quitting her, though she felt herself so much interested in her affairs, that every word she spoke gave her a desire to lengthen the conversation.

tion. She ardently wiſhed to make her ſome preſent, but was reſtrained by the fear of offending, or of being again refuſed; ſhe had, however, deviſed a private ſcheme for ſerving her more effectually than by the donation of a few guineas, and therefore, after earneſtly begging to hear from her if ſhe could poſſibly be of any uſe, ſhe told her that ſhe ſhould not find her confidence miſplaced, and promiſing again to ſee her ſoon, reluctantly departed.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

An Expedient.

THE ſcheme now projected by Cecilia, was to acquaint the ſurgeon who had already attended Mr. Belfield with his preſent ſituation and addreſs, and to deſire him to continue his viſits, for the payment of which ſhe would herſelf be accountable.

The raillery of young Delvile, however, had taught her to fear the conſtructions of the world, and ſhe therefore purpoſed to keep both the ſurgeon and Mr. Belfield ignorant to whom they were indebted. She was aware, indeed, that whatever might be her management, that high-ſpirited and unfortunate young man would be extremely hurt to find himſelf thus detected and purſued; but ſhe thought his life too well worth preſerving to let it be ſacrificed to his pride, and her internal conviction of being herſelf the immediate cauſe of its preſent danger, gave to her an anxious and reſtleſs deſire to be herſelf the means of extricating him from it.

Rupil, the name of the ſurgeon, ſhe had already heard mentioned by Mr. Arnott, and

and in getting into her chair, ſhe ordered Ralph, her man, to enquire where he lived.

"I know already where he lives, madam," anſwered Ralph, "for I ſaw his name over a door in Cavendiſh-ſtreet, Oxford-road; I took particular notice of it, becauſe it was at the houſe where you ſtood up that day on account of the mob that was waiting to ſee the malefactors go to Tyburn."

This anſwer unravelled to Cecilia a myſtery which had long perplext her; for the ſpeeches of young Delvile when he had ſurpriſed her in that ſituation were now fully explained. In ſeeing her come out of the ſurgeon's houſe, he had naturally concluded ſhe had only entered it to aſk news of his patient, Mr. Belfield; her proteſtations of merely ſtanding up to avoid the crowd, he had only laughed at; and his hints at her reſerve and diſſimulation, were meant but to reproach her for refuſing his offer of procuring her intelligence, at the very time when, to all appearance, ſhe anxiouſly, though clandeſtinely, ſought it for herſelf.

This diſcovery, notwithſtanding it relieved her from all ſuſpence of his meaning, gave her much vexation: to be ſuppoſed to take an intereſt ſo ardent, yet ſo private, in the affairs of Mr. Belfield, might well authoriſe all ſuſpicions of her partiality for him: and even if any doubt had yet remained,

mained, the unlucky meeting upon the ſtairs at his lodgings, would not fail to diſpel it, and confirm the notion of her ſecret regard. She hoped, however, to have ſoon ſome opportunity of clearing up the miſtake, and reſolved in the mean time to be ſtudiouſly cautious in avoiding all appearances that might ſtrengthen it.

No caution, however, and no apprehenſion, could intimidate her active humanity from putting into immediate execution a plan in which ſhe feared any delay might be fatal; and therefore the moment ſhe got home, ſhe wrote the following note to the ſurgeon.

"To —— RUPIL, Eſq.

March 27, 1779.

A FRIEND of Mr. Belfield begs Mr. Rupil will immediately call upon that gentleman, who is in lodgings about the middle of Swallow-ſtreet, and inſiſt upon viſiting him till he is perfectly recovered. Mr. Rupil is entreated not to make known this requeſt, nor to receive from Mr. Belfield any return for his attendance; but to attribute the diſcovery of his reſidence to accident, and to reſt aſſured he ſhall be amply recompenſed for his time and trouble by the friend who makes this application, and who is willing to give any ſecurity that Mr. Rupil

ſhall think proper to mention, for the performance of this engagement."

Her next difficulty was in what manner to have this note conveyed; to ſend her own ſervant was inevitably betraying herſelf, to employ any other was riſking a confidence that might be ſtill more dangerous, and ſhe could not truſt to the penny-poſt, as her propoſal required an anſwer. After much deliberation, ſhe at length determined to have recourſe to Mrs. Hill, to whoſe ſervices ſhe was entitled, and upon whoſe fidelity ſhe could rely.

The morning was already far advanced, but the Harrels dined late, and ſhe would not loſe a day where even an hour might be of importance. She went therefore immediately to Mrs. Hill, whom ſhe found already removed into her new habitation in Fetter-lane, and equally buſy and happy in the change of ſcene and of employment. She gave to her the note, which ſhe deſired her to carry to Cavendiſh-ſtreet directly, and either to deliver it into Mr. Rupil's own hands, or to bring it back if he was out; but upon no conſideration to make known whence or from whom it came.

She then went into the back part of the ſhop, which by Mrs. Roberts was called the parlour, and amuſed herſelf during the abſence of her meſſenger, by playing with the children.

Mrs. Hill at her return ſaid ſhe had found Mr. Rupil at home, and as ſhe refuſed to give the letter to the ſervant, ſhe had been taken into a room where he was talking with a gentleman, to whom, as ſoon as he had read it, he ſaid with a laugh, "Why here's another perſon with the ſame propoſal as yours! however, I ſhall treat you both alike." And then he wrote an anſwer, which he ſealed up, and bid her take care of. This anſwer was as follows:

"MR. RUPIL will certainly attend Mr. Belfield, whoſe friends may be ſatisfied he will do all in his power to recover him, without receiving any recompence but the pleaſure of ſerving a gentleman who is ſo much beloved."

Cecilia, charmed at this unhoped for ſucceſs, was making further enquiries into what had paſſed, when Mrs. Hill, in a low voice, ſaid, "There's the gentleman, madam, who was with Mr. Rupil when I gave him the letter. I had a notion he was dodging me all the way I came, for I ſaw him juſt behind me, turn which way I would."

Cecilia then looked—and perceived young Delvile! who, after ſtopping a moment at the door, came into the ſhop, and deſired to be ſhewn ſome gloves, which, among other things, were laid in the window.

Extremely diſconcerted at the ſight of him, ſhe began now almoſt to fancy there was ſome fatality attending her acquantance with him, ſince ſhe was always ſure of meeting, when ſhe had any reaſon to wiſh avoiding him.

As ſoon as he ſaw he was obſerved by her, he bowed with the utmoſt reſpect: ſhe coloured in returning the ſalutation, and prepared, with no little vexation, for another attack, and further rallery, ſimilar to what ſhe had already received from him: but, as ſoon as he had made his purchaſe, he bowed to her again, and, without ſpeaking, left the ſhop.

A ſilence ſo unexpected at once aſtoniſhed and diſturbed her; ſhe again deſired to hear all that had paſſed at Mr. Rupil's, and from the relation gathered that Delvile had himſelf undertaken to be reſponſible for his attendance upon Mr. Belfield.

A liberality ſo like her own failed not to impreſs her with the moſt lively eſteem: but this ſerved rather to augment than leſſen the pain with which ſhe conſidered the clandeſtine appearance ſhe thus repeatedly made to him. She had no doubt he had immediately concluded ſhe was author of the application to the ſurgeon, and that he followed her meſſenger merely to aſcertain the fact; while his ſilence when he had made the diſcovery, ſhe could only attribute

to his now believing that her regard for Mr. Belfield was too ſerious for raillery.

Doubly, however, ſhe rejoiced at the generoſity of Mr. Rupil, as it rendered wholly unneceſſary her further interference: for ſhe now ſaw with ſome alarm the danger to which benevolence itſelf, directed towards a youthful object, might expoſe her.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

A REMONSTRANCE.

CECILIA returned home ſo late, that ſhe was ſummoned to the dining parlour the moment ſhe entered the houſe. Her morning dreſs, and her long abſence, excited much curioſity in Mrs. Harrel, which a quick ſucceſſion of queſtions evaſively anſwered ſoon made general; and Sir Robert Floyer, turning to her with a look of ſurpriſe, ſaid, "If you have ſuch freaks as theſe, Miſs Beverley, I muſt begin to enquire a little more into your proceedings."

"That, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, very coldly, "would ill repay your trouble"

"When we get her to Violet Bank," cried Mr. Harrel, "we ſhall be able to keep a better watch over her."

"I hope ſo," anſwered Sir Robert; "though faith ſhe has been ſo demure, that I never ſuppoſed ſhe did any thing but read ſermons. However, I find there's no going upon truſt with women, any more than with money."

"Ay, Sir Robert," cried Mrs. Harrel, "you know I always adviſed you not to

be quite ſo eaſy, and I am ſure I really think you deſerve a little ſeverity, for not being more afraid."

"Afraid of what, madam?" cried the baronet; "of a young lady's walking out without me? Do you think I wiſh to be any reſtraint upon Miſs Beverley's time in a morning, while I have the happineſs of waiting upon her every afternoon?"

Cecilia was thunderſtruck by this ſpeech, which not only expreſſed an open avowal of his pretenſions, but a confident ſecurity of his ſucceſs. She was ſhocked that a man of ſuch principles ſhould even for a moment preſume upon her favour, and irritated at the ſtubbornneſs of Mr. Harrel in not acquainting him with her refuſal.

His intimation of coming to the houſe for *the happineſs of waiting upon her*, made her determine, without loſing a moment, to ſeek herſelf an explanation with him: while the diſcovery that he was included in the Eaſter party, which various other concomitant cauſes had already rendered diſagreeable to her, made her look forward to that purpoſed expedition with nothing but unwillingneſs and diſtaſte.

But though her earneſtneſs to conclude this affair made her now put herſelf voluntarily in the way of the baronet, ſhe found her

her plan always counteracted by Mr. Harrel, who, with an officiouſneſs too obvious to paſs for chance, conſtantly ſtopt the progreſs of any diſcourſe in which he did not himſelf bear a part. A more paſſionate admirer might not have been ſo eaſily defeated; but Sir Robert, too proud for ſolicitation, and too indolent for aſſiduity, was very ſoon checked, becauſe very ſoon wearied.

The whole evening, therefore, to her infinite mortification, paſſed away without affording her any opportunity of making known to him his miſtake.

Her next effort was to remonſtrate with Mr. Harrel himſelf; but this ſcheme was not more eaſy of execution than the other, ſince Mr. Harrel, ſuſpecting ſhe meant again to dun him for her money, avoided all ſeparate converſation with her ſo ſkilfully, that ſhe could not find a moment to make him hear her.

She then reſolved to apply to his lady; but here her ſucceſs was not better: Mrs. Harrel, dreading another lecture upon œconomy, peeviſhly anſwered to her requeſt of a conference, that ſhe was not very well, and could not talk gravely.

Cecilia, juſtly offended with them all, had now no reſource but in Mr. Monckton,

whoſe counſel for effectually diſmiſſing the baronet, ſhe determined to ſolicit by the firſt opportunity.

The moment, therefore, that ſhe next ſaw him, ſhe acquainted him with the ſpeeches of Sir Robert and the behaviour of Mr. Harrel.

There needed no rhetoric to point out to Mr. Monckton the danger of ſuffering ſuch expectations, or the impropriety of her preſent ſituation: he was ſtruck with both in a manner the moſt forcible, and ſpared not for warmth of expreſſion to alarm her delicacy, or add to her diſpleaſure. But chiefly he was exaſperated againſt Mr. Harrel, aſſuring her there could be no doubt but that he had ſome particular intereſt in ſo ſtrenuouſly and artfully ſupporting the pretenſions of Sir Robert. Cecilia endeavoured to refute this opinion, which ſhe regarded as proceeding rather from prejudice than juſtice; but when ſhe mentioned that the baronet was invited to ſpend the Eaſter holidays at Violet Bank, he repreſented with ſuch energy the conſequent conſtructions of the world, as well as the unavoidable encouragement ſuch intimacy would imply, that he terrified her into an earneſt entreaty to ſuggeſt to her ſome way of deliverance.

"There is only one;" anſwered he, "you

" you muſt peremptorily refuſe to go to Violet Bank yourſelf. If, after what has paſſed, you are included in the ſame party with Sir Robert, you give a ſanction yourſelf to the reports already circulated of your engagements with him: and the effect of ſuch a ſanction will be more ſerious than you can eaſily imagine, ſince the knowledge that a connection is believed in the world, frequently, if not generally, leads by imperceptible degrees to its real ratification."

Cecilia, with the utmoſt alacrity, promiſed implicitly to follow his advice, whatever might be the oppoſition of Mr. Harrel. He quitted her, therefore, with unuſual ſatisfaction, happy in his power over her mind, and anticipating with ſecret rapture the felicity he had in reſerve from viſiting her during the abſence of the family.

As no private interview was neceſſary for making known her intention of giving up the Eaſter party, which was to take place in two day's time, ſhe mentioned the next morning her deſign of ſpending the holidays in town, when Mr. Harrel ſauntered into the breakfaſt room to give ſome commiſſion to his lady.

At firſt he only laughed at her plan, gaily rallying her upon her love of ſolitude; but when he found it was ſerious, he very warmly oppoſed it, and called upon Mrs.

Harrel to join in his expoſtulations. That lady complied, but in ſo faint a manner, that Cecilia ſoon ſaw ſhe did not wiſh to prevail; and with a concern that coſt her infinite pain, now finally perceived that not only all her former affection was ſubſided into indifference, but that, ſince ſhe had endeavoured to abridge her amuſements, ſhe regarded her as a ſpy, and dreaded her as the cenſor of her conduct.

Mean while Mr. Arnott, who was preſent, though he interfered not in the debate, waited the event with anxiety; naturally hoping her objections aroſe from her diſlike of Sir Robert, and ſecretly reſolving to be guided himſelf by her motions.

Cecilia at length, tired of the importunities of Mr. Harrel, gravely ſaid, that if he deſired to hear the reaſons which obliged her to refuſe his requeſt, ſhe was ready to communicate them.

Mr. Harrel, after a little heſitation, accompanied her into another room.

She then declared her reſolu ion not to live under the ſame roof with Sir Robert, and very openly expreſſed her vexation and diſpleaſure, that he ſo evidently perſiſted in giving that gentleman encouragement.

"My dear Miſs Beverley," anſwered he, careleſsly, "when young ladies will not know their own minds, it is neceſſary ſome friend

friend ſhould tell it them: you were certainly very favourable to Sir Robert but a ſhort time ago, and ſo, I dare ſay, you will be again, when you have ſeen more of him."

"You amaze me, Sir!" cried Cecilia: "when was I favourable to him? Has he not always and regularly been my averſion?"

"I fancy," anſwered Mr. Harrel, laughing, "you will not eaſily perſuade him to think ſo; your behaviour at the Opera-houſe was ill calculated to give him that notion."

"My behaviour at the Opera-houſe, Sir, I have already explained to you; and if Sir Robert himſelf has any doubts, either from that circumſtance or from any other, pardon me if I ſay they can only be attributed to your unwillingneſs to remove them. I entreat you, therefore, to trifle with him no longer, nor to ſubject me again to the freedom of implications extremely diſagreeable to me."

"O fie, fie, Miſs Beverley! after all that has paſſed, after his long expectations, and his conſtant attendance, you cannot for a moment think ſeriouſly of diſcarding him."

Cecilia, equally ſurpriſed and provoked by this ſpeech, could not for a moment tell how

how to anſwer it; and Mr. Harrel, wilfully miſinterpreting her ſilence, took her hand, and ſaid, "Come, I am ſure you have too much honour to make a fool of ſuch a man as Sir Robert Floyer. There is not a woman in town who will not envy your choice, and I aſſure you there is not a man in England I would ſo ſoon recommend to you."

He would then have hurried her back to the next room; but, drawing away her hand with undiſguiſed reſentment, "No, Sir," ſhe cried, "this muſt not paſs! my poſitive rejection of Sir Robert the inſtant you communicated to me his propoſals, you can neither have forgotten nor miſtaken: and you muſt not wonder if I acknowledge myſelf extremely diſobliged by your unaccountable perſeverance in refuſing to receive my anſwer."

"Young ladies who have been brought up in the country," returned Mr. Harrel, with his uſual negligence, "are always ſo high flown in their notions, it is difficult to deal with them; but as I am much better acquainted with the world than you can be, you muſt give me leave to tell you, that if, after all, you refuſe Sir Robert, it will be uſing him very ill."

"Why will you ſay ſo, Sir?" cried Cecilia, "when it is utterly impoſſible you can have formed ſo prepoſterous an opinion.

nion. Pray hear me, however, finally, and pray tell Sir Robert——"

"No, no," interrupted he, with affected gaiety, "you ſhall manage it all your own way; I will have nothing to do with the quarrels of lovers."

And then, with a pretended laugh, he haſtily left her.

Cecilia was ſo much incenſed by this impracticable behaviour, that inſtead of returning to the family, ſhe went directly to her own room. It was eaſy for her to ſee that Mr. Harrel was bent upon uſing every method he could deviſe, to entangle her into ſome engagement with Sir Robert, and though ſhe could not imagine the meaning of ſuch a ſcheme, the littleneſs of his behaviour excited her contempt, and the long-continued error of the baronet gave her the utmoſt uneaſineſs. She again determined to ſeek an explanation with him herſelf, and immovably to refuſe joining the party to Violet Bank.

The following day, while the ladies and Mr. Arnott were at breakfaſt, Mr. Harrel came into the room to enquire if they ſhould all be ready to ſet off for his villa by ten o'clock the next day. Mrs. Harrel and her brother anſwered in the affirmative; but Cecilia was ſilent, and he turned to her and repeated his queſtion.

"Do

"Do you think me so capricious, Sir," said she, "that after telling you but yesterday I could not be of your party, I shall tell you to-day that I can?"

"Why you do not really mean to remain in town by yourself?" replied he, "you cannot suppose that will be an eligible plan for a young lady. On the contrary, it will be so very improper, that I think myself, as your Guardian, obliged to oppose it."

Amazed at this authoritative speech, Cecilia looked at him with a mixture of mortification and anger; but knowing it would be vain to resist his power if he was resolute to exert it, she made not any answer.

"Besides," he continued, "I have a plan for some alterations in the house during my absence; and I think your room, in particular, will be much improved by them: but it will be impossible to employ any workmen, if we do not all quit the premises."

This determined persecution now seriously alarmed her; she saw that Mr. Harrel would omit no expedient or stratagem to encourage the addresses of Sir Robert, and force her into his presence; and she began next to apprehend that her connivance in his conduct might be presumed upon by

that

that gentleman: ſhe reſolved, therefore, as the laſt and only effort in her power for avoiding him, to endeavour to find an accommodation at the houſe of Mrs. Delvile, during the excurſion to Violet Bank: and if, when ſhe returned to Portman-ſquare, the baronet ſtill perſevered in his attendance, to entreat her friend Mr. Monekton would take upon himſelf the charge of undeceiving him.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

A VICTORY.

AS not a moment was now to be loſt, Cecilia had no ſooner ſuggeſted this ſcheme, than ſhe haſtened to St. James's Square, to try its practicability.

She found Mrs. Delvile alone, and ſtill at breakfaſt.

After the firſt compliments were over, while ſhe was conſidering in what manner to introduce her propoſal, Mrs. Delvile herſelf led to the ſubject, by ſaying "I am very ſorry to hear we are ſo ſoon to loſe you; but I hope Mr. Harrel does not intend to make any long ſtay at his villa; for if he does, I ſhall be half tempted to come and run away with you from him."

"And that," ſaid Cecilia, delighted with this opening, "would be an honour I am *more* than half tempted to deſire."

"Why indeed your leaving London at this time," continued Mrs. Delvile, "is, for me, particularly unfortunate, as, if I could now be favoured with your viſits, I ſhould doubly value them; for Mr. Delvile is gone to ſpend the holydays at the Duke

Duke of Derwent's, whither I was not well enough to accompany him; my ſon has his own engagements, and there are ſo few people I can bear to ſee, that I ſhall live almoſt entirely alone."

"If I," cried Cecilia, "in ſuch a ſituation might hope to be admitted, how gladly for that happineſs would I exchange my expedition to Violet-bank!"

"You are very good, and very amiable," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, "and your ſociety would, indeed, give me infinite ſatisfaction. Yet I am no enemy to ſolitude; on the contrary, company is commonly burthenſome to me; I find few who have any power to give me entertainment, and even of thoſe few, the chief part have in their manners, ſituation, or characters, an unfortunate *ſomething*, that generally renders a near connection with them inconvenient or diſagreeable. There are, indeed, ſo many draw-backs to regard and intimacy, from pride, from propriety, and various other collateral cauſes, that rarely as we meet with people of brilliant parts, there is almoſt ever ſome objection to our deſire of meeting them again. Yet to live wholly alone is chearleſs and depreſſing; and with you, at leaſt," taking Cecilia's hand, "I find not one ſingle obſtacle to oppoſe to a thouſand inducements, which invite me to form a friendſhip

friendſhip that I can only hope may be as laſting, as I am ſure it will be pleaſant."

Cecilia expreſſed her ſenſe of this partiality in the warmeſt terms; and Mrs. Delvile, ſoon diſcovering by her manner that ſhe took not any delight in her intended viſit to Violet-Bank, began next to queſtion her whether it would be poſſible for her to give it up.

She inſtantly anſwered in the affirmative.

"And would you really be ſo obliging," cried Mrs. Delvile, with ſome ſurpriſe, "as to beſtow upon me the time you had deſtined for this gay excurſion?"

"Moſt willingly," anſwered Cecilia, "if you are ſo good as to wiſh it."

"But can you alſo——for you muſt by no means remain alone in Portman Square, ——manage to live entirely in my houſe till Mr. Harrel's return?"

To this propoſal, which was what ſhe moſt deſired, Cecilia gave a glad aſſent; and Mrs. Delvile, extremely pleaſed with her compliance, promiſed to have an apartment prepared for her immediately.

She then haſtened home, to announce her new plan.

This ſhe took occaſion to do when the family was aſſembled at dinner. The ſurprize with which ſhe was heard was very general: Sir Robert ſeemed at a loſs what

concluſion

concluſion to draw from her information; Mr. Arnott was half elated with pleaſure, and half depreſſed with apprehenſion; Mrs. Harrel wondered, without any other ſenſation; and Mr. Harrel himſelf was evidently the moſt concerned of the party.

Every effort of perſuaſion and importunity he now eſſayed to prevail upon her to give up this ſcheme, and ſtill accompany them to the villa; but ſhe coolly anſwered that her engagement with Mrs. Delvile was decided, and ſhe had appointed to wait upon her the next morning.

When her reſolution was found ſo ſteady, a general ill humour took place of ſurpriſe: Sir Robert now had the air of a man who thought himſelf affronted; Mr. Arnott was wretched from a thouſand uncertainties; Mrs. Harrel, indeed, was ſtill the moſt indifferent; but Mr. Harrel could hardly repreſs his diſappointment and anger.

Cecilia, however, was all gaiety and pleaſure: in removing only from the houſe of one guardian to another, ſhe knew ſhe could not be oppoſed; and the flattering readineſs with which Mrs. Delvile had anticipated her requeſt, without enquiring into her motives, had relieved her from a ſituation which now grew extremely diſtreſſing, without giving to her the pain of making complaints of Mr. Harrel. The abſence of Mr. Delvile

Delvile contributed to her happineſs, and ſhe much rejoiced in having now the proſpect of a ſpeedy opportunity to explain to his ſon, whatever had appeared myſterious in her conduct reſpecting Mr. Belfield. If ſhe had any thing to regret, it was merely the impoſſibility, at this time, of waiting for the counſel of Mr. Monckton.

The next morning, while the family was in the midſt of preparation for departure, ſhe took leave of Mrs. Harrel, who faintly lamented the loſs of her company, and then haſtily made her compliments to Mr. Harrel and Mr. Arnott, and putting herſelf into a chair, was conveyed to her new habitation.

Mrs. Delvile received her with the moſt diſtinguiſhed politeneſs; ſhe conducted her to the apartment which had been prepared for her, led her to the library, which ſhe deſired her to make uſe of as her own, and gave her the moſt obliging charges to remember that ſhe was in a houſe of which ſhe had the command.

Young Delvile did not make his appearance till dinner time. Cecilia, from recollecting the ſtrange ſituations in which ſhe had lately been ſeen by him, bluſhed extremely when ſhe firſt met his eyes; but finding him gay and eaſy, general in his converſation, and undeſigning in his looks, ſhe

ſhe ſoon recovered from her embarraſſment, and paſſed the reſt of the day without reſtraint or uneaſineſs.

Every hour ſhe ſpent with Mrs. Delvile, contributed to raiſe in her eſteem the mind and underſtanding of that lady. She found, indeed, that it was not for nothing ſhe was accuſed of pride, but ſhe found at the ſame time ſo many excellent qualities, ſo much true dignity of mind, and ſo noble a ſpirit of liberality, that however great was the reſpect ſhe ſeemed to demand, it was always inferior to what ſhe felt inclined to pay.

Nor was young Delvile leſs rapid in the progreſs he made in her favour; his character, upon every opportunity of ſhewing it, roſe in her opinion, and his diſpoſition and manners had a mingled ſweetneſs and vivacity that rendered his ſociety attractive, and his converſation ſpirited.

Here, therefore, Cecilia experienced that happineſs ſhe ſo long had coveted in vain: her life was neither public nor private, her amuſements were neither diſſipated nor retired; the company ſhe ſaw were either people of high rank or ſtrong parts, and their viſits were neither frequent nor long. The ſituation ſhe quitted gave a zeſt to that into which ſhe entered, for ſhe was now no longer ſhocked by extravagance or levity, no longer tormented with addreſſes which diſguſted

diſguſted her, nor mortified by the ingratitude of the friend ſhe had endeavoured to ſerve. All was ſmooth and ſerene, yet lively and intereſting.

Her plan, however, of clearing to young Delvile his miſtakes concerning Belfield, ſhe could not put in execution; for he now never led to the ſubject, though he was frequently alone with her, nor ſeemed at all deſirous to renew his former raillery, or repeat his enquiries. She wondered at this change in him, but choſe rather to wait the revival of his own curioſity, than to diſtreſs or perplex herſelf by contriving methods of explanation.

Situated thus happily, ſhe had now one only anxiety, which was to know whether, and in what manner, Mr. Belfield had received his ſurgeon, as well as the actual ſtate of his own and his ſiſter's affairs: but the fear of again encountering young Delvile in ſuſpicious circumſtances, deterred her at preſent from going to their houſe. Yet her natural benevolence, which partial convenience never lulled to ſleep, impreſſing her with an apprehenſion that her ſervices might be wanted, ſhe was induced to write to Miſs Belfield, though ſhe forbore to viſit her.

Her letter was ſhort, but kind and to the purpoſe: ſhe apologized for her officiouſneſs, deſired to know if her brother was better,

better, and entreated her, in terms the moſt delicate, to acquaint her if yet ſhe would accept from her any aſſiſtance.

She ſent this letter by her ſervant, who, after waiting a conſiderable time, brought her the following anſwer.

To Miſs Beverley.

Ah madam! your goodneſs quite melts me! we want nothing, however, yet, though I fear we ſhall not ſay ſo much longer. But though I hope I ſhall never forget myſelf ſo as to be proud and impertinent, I will rather ſtruggle with any hardſhip than beg, for I will not diſoblige my poor brother by any fault that I can help, eſpecially now he is fallen ſo low. But, thank heaven, his wound has at laſt been dreſſed, for the ſurgeon has found him out, and he attends him for nothing; though my brother is willing to part with every thing he is worth in the world, rather than owe that obligation to him: yet I often wonder why he hates ſo to be obliged, for when he was rich himſelf he was always doing ſomething to oblige other people. But I fear the ſurgeon thinks him very bad! for he won't ſpeak to us when we follow him down ſtairs.

I am ſadly aſhamed to ſend this bad writing, but I dare not aſk my brother for any

help, becauſe he would only be angry that I wrote any thing about him at all; but indeed I have ſeen too little good come of pride to think of imitating it; and as I have not his genius, I am ſure there is no need I ſhould have his defects: ill, therefore, as I write, you, madam, who have ſo much goodneſs and gentleneſs, would forgive it, I believe, if it was worſe, almoſt. And though we are not in need of your kind offers, it is a great comfort to me to think there is a lady in the world that, if we come to be quite deſtitute, and if the proud heart of my poor unhappy brother ſhould be quite broke down, will look upon our diſtreſs with pity, and generouſly help us from quite ſinking under it. I remain,

Madam,

with the moſt humble reſpect,
your ever moſt obliged
humble ſervant,
HENRIETTA BELFIELD.

Cecilia, much moved by the ſimplicity of this letter, determined that her very firſt viſit from Portman-Square ſhould be to its fair and innocent writer. And having now an aſſurance that ſhe was in no immediate diſtreſs, and that her brother was actually under Mr. Rupil's care, ſhe diſmiſſed from her mind the only ſubject of uneaſineſs that

at

at preſent had endeavoured to diſturb it, and gave herſelf wholly up to the delightful ſerenity of unallayed happineſs.

Few are the days of felicity unmixed which we acknowledge while we experience, though many are thoſe we deplore, when by ſorrow taught their value, and by misfortune, their loſs. Time with Cecilia now glided on with ſuch rapidity, that before ſhe thought the morning half over, the evening was cloſed, and ere ſhe was ſenſible the firſt week was paſt, the ſecond was departed for ever. More and more pleaſed with the inmates of her new habitation, ſhe found in the abilities of Mrs. Delvile ſources inexhauſtible of entertainment, and in the diſpoſition and ſentiments of her ſon ſomething ſo concordant to her own, that almoſt every word he ſpoke ſhewed the ſympathy of their minds, and almoſt every look which caught her eyes was a reciprocation of intelligence. Her heart, deeply wounded of late by unexpected indifference, and undeſerved mortification, was now, perhaps, more than uſually ſuſceptible of thoſe penetrating and exquiſite pleaſures which friendſhip and kindneſs poſſeſs the higheſt powers of beſtowing. Eaſy, gay, and airy, ſhe only roſe to happineſs, and only retired to reſt; and not merely heightened was her preſent enjoyment by her paſt diſappoint-

ment, but, carrying her retroſpection to her earlieſt remembrance, ſhe ſtill found her actual ſituation more peculiarly adapted to her taſte and temper, than any ſhe had hitherto at any time experienced.

The very morning that the deſtined fortnight was elapſed, ſhe received a note from Mrs. Harrel, with information of her arrival in town, and an entreaty that ſhe would return to Portman-Square.

Cecilia, who, thus happy, had forgot to mark the progreſs of time, was now all amazement to find the term of her abſence ſo ſoon paſt. She thought of going back with the utmoſt reluctance, and of quitting her new abode with the moſt lively regret. The repreſentations of Mr. Monckton daily loſt their force, and notwithſtanding her diſlike of Mr. Delvile, ſhe had no wiſh ſo earneſt as that of being ſettled in his family for the reſt of her minority.

To effect this was her next thought; yet ſhe knew not how to make the propoſal, but from the uncommon partiality of Mrs. Delvile, ſhe hoped, with a very little encouragement, ſhe would lead to it herſelf.

Here, however, ſhe was diſappointed; Mrs. Delvile, when ſhe heard of the ſummons from the Harrels, expreſſed her ſorrow at loſing her in terms of the moſt flattering

tering regret, yet ſeemed to think the parting indiſpenſable, and dropt not the moſt diſtant hint of attempting to prevent it.

Cecilia, vexed and diſconcerted, then made arrangements for her departure, which ſhe fixed for the next morning.

The reſt of this day, unlike every other which for the laſt fortnight had preceded it, was paſſed with little appearance, and no reality of ſatisfaction: Mrs. Delvile was evidently concerned, her ſon openly avowed his chagrin, and Cecilia felt the utmoſt mortification; yet, though every one was diſcontented, no effort was made towards obtaining any delay.

The next morning during breakfaſt, Mrs. Delvile very elegantly thanked her for granting to her ſo much of her time, and earneſtly begged to ſee her in future whenever ſhe could be ſpared from her other friends; proteſting ſhe was now ſo accuſtomed to her ſociety, that ſhe ſhould require both long and frequent viſits to ſoften the ſeparation. This requeſt was very eagerly ſeconded by young Delvile, who warmly ſpoke his ſatisfaction that his mother had found ſo charming a friend, and unaffectedly joined in her entreaties that the intimacy might be ſtill more cloſely cemented.

Cecilia had no great difficulty in according her compliance to thoſe demands, of

which the kindneſs and cordiality ſomewhat leſſened her diſturbance at the parting.

When Mrs. Harrel's carriage arrived, Mrs. Delvile took a moſt affectionate leave of her, and her ſon attended her to the coach.

In her way down ſtairs, he ſtopt her for a few moments, and in ſome confuſion ſaid "I wiſh much to apologize to Miſs Beverley, before her departure, for the very groſs miſtake of which I have been guilty. I know not if it is poſſible ſhe can pardon me, and I hardly know myſelf by what perverſity and blindneſs I perſiſted ſo long in my error."

"O," cried Cecilia, much rejoiced at this voluntary explanation, "if you are but convinced you were really in an error, I have nothing more to wiſh. Appearances, indeed, were ſo ſtrangely againſt me, that I ought not, perhaps, to wonder they deceived you."

"This is being candid indeed," anſwered he, again leading her on: "and in truth, though your anxiety was obvious, its cauſe was obſcure, and where any thing is left to conjecture, opinion interferes, and the judgment is eaſily warped. My own partiality, however, for Mr. Belfield, will I hope plead my excuſe, as from that, and not from any prejudice againſt the Baronet, my

my miſtake aroſe: on the contrary, ſo highly I reſpect your taſte and your diſcernment, that your approbation, when known, can ſcarcely fail of ſecuring mine."

Great as was the aſtoniſhment of Cecilia at the concluſion of this ſpeech; ſhe was at the coach door before ſhe could make any anſwer: but Delvile, perceiving her ſurpriſe, added, while he handed her in, "Is it poſſible——but no, it is *not* poſſible I ſhould be again miſtaken. I forbore to ſpeak at all, till I had information by which I could not be miſled."

"I know not in what unaccountable obſcurity," cried Cecilia, "I, or my affairs, may be involved, but I perceive that the cloud which I had hoped was diſſipated, is thicker and more impenetrable than ever."

Delvile then bowed to her with a look that accuſed her of inſincerity, and the carriage drove away.

Teazed by theſe eternal miſtakes, and provoked to find that though the object of her ſuppoſed partiality was ſo frequently changed, the notion of her poſitive engagement with one of the dueliſts was invariable, ſhe reſolved with all the ſpeed in her power, to commiſſion Mr. Monckton to wait upon Sir Robert Floyer, and in her own name give a formal rejection to his propoſals, and deſire him thenceforward to make known,

by every opportunity, their total independance of each other: for ſick of debating with Mr. Harrel, and deteſting all intercourſe with Sir Robert, ſhe now dropt her deſign of ſeeking an explanation herſelf.

She was received by Mrs. Harrel with the ſame coldneſs with which ſhe had parted from her. That lady appeared now to have ſome uneaſineſs upon her mind, and Cecilia endeavoured to draw from her its cauſe; but far from ſeeking any alleviation in friendſhip, ſhe ſtudiouſly avoided her, ſeeming pained by her converſation, and reproached by her ſight. Cecilia perceived this encreaſing reſerve with much concern, but with more indignation, conſcious that her good offices had merited a better reception, and angry to find that her advice had not merely failed of ſucceſs, but even expoſed her to averſion.

Mr. Harrel, on the contrary, behaved to her with unuſual civility, ſeemed eager to oblige her, and deſirous to render his houſe more agreeable to her than ever. But in this he did not proſper; for Cecilia, immediately upon her return, looking in her apartment for the projected alterations, and finding none had been made, was ſo diſguſted by ſuch a detection of duplicity, that he ſunk yet lower than before in her

her opinion, and ſhe repined at the neceſſity ſhe was under of any longer continuing his gueſt.

The joy of Mr. Arnott at again ſeeing her, was viſible and ſincere; and not a little was it encreaſed by finding that Cecilia, who ſought not more to avoid Mr. Harrel and Sir Robert, than ſhe was herſelf avoided by Mrs. Harrel, talked with pleaſure to nobody elſe in the houſe, and ſcarcely attempted to conceal that he was the only one of the family who poſſeſſed any portion of her eſteem.

Even Sir Robert appeared now to have formed a deſign of paying her rather more reſpect than he had hitherto thought neceſſary; but the violence he did himſelf was ſo evident, and his imperious nature ſeemed ſo repugnant to the taſk, that his inſolence, breaking forth by ſtarts, and checked only by compulſion, was but the more conſpicuous from his inadequate efforts to diſguiſe it.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

A COMPLAINT.

AS Cecilia now found herſelf cleared, at leaſt, of all ſuſpicions of harbouring too tender a regard for Mr. Belfield, her objections to viſiting his ſiſter were removed, and the morning after her return to Mr. Harrel's, ſhe went in a chair to Swallow-ſtreet.

She ſent her ſervant up ſtairs to enquire if ſhe might be admitted, and was immediately taken into the room where ſhe had twice before been received.

In a few minutes Miſs Belfield, ſoftly opening and ſhutting the door of the next apartment, made her appearance. She looked thin and pale, but much gratified by the ſight of Cecilia. "Ah madam!" ſhe cried, "you are good indeed not to forget us! and you can little think how it chears and conſoles me, that ſuch a lady as you can condeſcend to be kind to me.

It

It is quite the only pleaſure that I have now in the whole world."

"I grieve that you have no greater;" cried Cecilia, "you ſeem much fatigued and harraſſed. How is your brother? I fear you neglect your own health, by too much attention to his."

"No, indeed, madam; my mother does every thing for him herſelf, and hardly ſuffers any body elſe to go near him."

"What, then, makes you ſo melancholy?" ſaid Cecilia, taking her hand; "you do not look well; your anxiety, I am ſure, is too much for your ſtrength."

"How ſhould I look well, madam," anſwered ſhe, "living as I live? however, I will not talk of myſelf, but of my brother,—O he is ſo ill! indeed I am ſadly, ſadly afraid he will never be well again!"

"What does his ſurgeon ſay? you are too tender, and too much frightened to be any judge."

"It is not that I think myſelf he will die of his wound, for Mr. Rupil ſays the wound is almoſt nothing; but he is in a conſtant fever, and ſo thin, and ſo weak, that indeed it is almoſt impoſſible he ſhould recover!"

"You are too apprehenſive," ſaid Cecilia, "you know not what effect the country air may have upon him; there are many,

many expedients that with ſo young a man may yet be ſucceſsful."

"O no, the country air can do nothing for him! for I will not deceive you, madam, for that would be doubly a fault when I am ſo ready in blaming other people for wearing falſe appearances: beſides, you are ſo good and ſo gentle, that it quite compoſes me to talk with you. So I will honeſtly ſpeak the truth, and the whole truth at once; my poor brother is loſt—O I fear for ever loſt!— all by his own unhappy pride! he forgets his father was a tradeſman, he is aſhamed of all his family, and his whole deſire is to live among the grandeſt people, as if he belonged to no other. And now that he can no longer do that, he takes the diſappointment ſo to heart that he cannot get the better of it; and he told me this morning that he wiſhed he was dead, for he did not know why he ſhould live only to ſee his own ruin! But when he ſaw how I cried at his ſaying ſo, he was very ſorry indeed, for he has always been the kindeſt brother in the world, when he has been away from the great folks who have ſpoilt him: but why, ſaid he, Henrietta, why would you have me live, when inſtead of raiſing you and my poor mother into an higher ſtation, I am ſunk ſo low, that I only help to conſume your own poor pittances to ſupport me in my diſgrace!"

"I am

"I am ſorry indeed," ſaid Cecilia, "to find he has ſo deep a ſenſe of the failure of his expectations: but how happens it that *you* are ſo much wiſer? Young and inexperienced as you are, and early as you muſt have been accuſtomed, from your mother as well as from Mr. Belfield, to far other doctrine, the clearneſs of your judgment, and the juſtneſs of your remarks, aſtoniſh as much as they charm me."

"Ah madam! brought up as I have been brought up, there is little wonder I ſhould ſee the danger of an high education, let me be ever ſo ignorant of every thing elſe; for I, and all my ſiſters, have been the ſufferers the whole time: and while we were kept backward, that he might be brought forward, while we were denied comforts, that he might have luxuries, how could we help ſeeing the evil of ſo much vanity, and wiſhing we had all been brought up according to our proper ſtation? inſtead of living in continual inconvenience, and having one part of a family ſtruggling with diſtreſs, only to let another part of it appear in a way he had no right to!"

"How rationally," ſaid Cecilia, "have you conſidered this ſubject! and how much do I honour you for the affection you retain for your brother, notwithſtanding the wrongs

wrongs you have ſuffered to promote his elevation!"

"Indeed he deſerves it; take but from him that one fault, pride, and I believe he has not another: and humoured and darling child as from his infancy he has always been, who at that can wonder, or be angry?"

"And has he ſtill no plan, no ſcheme for his future deſtination?"

"No, madam, none at all; and that it is makes him ſo miſerable, and being ſo miſerable makes him ſo ill, for Mr. Rupil ſays that with ſuch uneaſineſs upon his mind, he can never, in his preſent low ſtate, get well. O it is melancholy to ſee how he is altered! and how he has loſt all his fine ſpirits! he that uſed to be the life of us all!—And now he hardly ever ſpeaks a word, or if he does, he ſays ſomething ſo ſorrowful that it cuts us to the ſoul! But yeſterday, when my mother and I thought he was aſleep, he lifted up his head, and looked at us both with the tears in his eyes, which almoſt broke our hearts to ſee, and then, in a low voice, he ſaid "what a lingering illneſs is this! Ah, my dear mother, you and poor Henrietta ought to wiſh it quicker over! for ſhould I recover, my life, hereafter, will but linger like this illneſs.

neſs. And afterwards he called out "what on earth is to become of me? I ſhall never have health for the army, nor intereſt, nor means; what am I to do? ſubſiſt in the very prime of my life upon the bounty of a widowed mother! or, with ſuch an education, ſuch connections as mine, enter at laſt into ſome mean and ſordid buſineſs?"

"It ſeems, then," ſaid Cecilia, "he now leſs wants a phyſician than a friend."

"He has a friend, madam, a noble friend, would he but accept his ſervices; but he never ſees him without ſuffering freſh vexation, and his fever encreaſes after every viſit he pays him."

"Well," cried Cecilia, riſing, "I find we ſhall not have an eaſy taſk to manage him; but keep up your ſpirits, and aſſure yourſelf he ſhall not be loſt, if it be poſſible to ſave him."

She then, though with much fearfulneſs of offending, once more made an offer of her purſe. Miſs Belfield no longer ſtarted at the propoſal; yet, gratefully thanking her, ſaid ſhe was not in any immediate diſtreſs, and did not dare riſk the diſpleaſure of her brother, unleſs driven to it by ſeverer neceſſity. Cecilia, however, drew from her a promiſe that ſhe would apply to her in any ſudden difficulty, and charged her never to think

think herſelf without a banker while her direction was known to her.

She then bid her adieu, and returned home; meditating the whole way upon ſome plan of employment and advantage for Mr. Belfield, which by clearing his proſpects, might revive his ſpirits, and facilitate his recovery: for ſince his mind was ſo evidently the ſeat of his diſeaſe, ſhe ſaw that unleſs ſhe could do more for him, ſhe had yet done nothing.

Her meditation, however, turned to no account; ſhe could ſuggeſt nothing, for ſhe was ignorant what was eligible to ſuggeſt. The ſtations and employments of men ſhe only knew by occaſionally hearing that ſuch were their profeſſions, and ſuch their ſituations in life; but with the means and gradations by which they aroſe to them ſhe was wholly unacquainted.

Mr. Monckton, her conſtant reſource in all caſes of difficulty, immediately occurred to her as her moſt able counſellor, and ſhe determined by the firſt opportunity to conſult with him upon the ſubject, certain of advice the moſt judicious from his experience, and knowledge of the world.

But though ſhe reſted upon him her ſerious expectations of aſſiſtance, another idea entered her mind not leſs pleaſant, though

leſs

leſs promiſing of utility: this was to mention her views to young Delvile. He was already, ſhe knew, well informed of the diſtreſs of Mr. Belfield, and ſhe hoped, by openly aſking his opinion, to confirm to him her freedom from any engagement with that gentleman, and convince him, at the ſame time, by her application to himſelf, that ſhe was equally clear of any tie with the Baronet.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

A Sympathy.

THE next day Cecilia had appointed to ſpend in St. James's Square; and ſhe knew by experience that in its courſe, ſhe ſhould in all probability find ſome opportunity of ſpeaking with Delvile alone.

This accordingly happened; for in the evening Mrs. Delvile quitted the room for a few moments to anſwer a letter. Cecilia then, left with her ſon, ſaid, after a little heſitation, "Will you not think me very ſtrange if I ſhould take the liberty to conſult you upon ſome buſineſs?"

"I already think you very ſtrange," anſwered he; "ſo ſtrange that I know not any one who at all reſembles you. But what is this conſultation in which you will permit me to have a voice?"

"You are acquainted, I believe, with the diſtreſs of Mr. Belfield?"

"I am; and I think his ſituation the moſt melancholy that can be imagined. I pity him with my whole ſoul, and nothing would give me greater joy than an opportunity of ſerving him."

"He

"He is, indeed, much to be compaſſionated," returned Cecilia; "and if ſomething is not ſpeedily done for him, I fear he will be utterly loſt. The agitation of his mind baffles all the power of medicine, and till that is relieved, his health can never be reſtored. His ſpirit, probably always too high for his rank in life, now ſtruggles againſt every attack of ſickneſs and of poverty, in preference to yielding to his fate, and applying to his friends for their intereſt and aſſiſtance. I mean not to vindicate his obduracy, yet I wiſh it were poſſible it could be ſurmounted. Indeed I dread to think what may become of him! feeling at preſent nothing but wretchedneſs and pain, looking forward in future to nothing but ruin and deſpair!"

"There is no man," cried young Delvile, with emotion, "who might not rather envy than pity ſufferings which give riſe to ſuch compaſſion!"

"Pecuniary aſſiſtance he will not accept," ſhe continued, "and, indeed, his mind is ſuperior to receiving conſolation from ſuch temporary relief; I wiſh him, therefore, to be put into ſome way of life by which his own talents, which have long enough amuſed the world, may at length become ſerviceable to himſelf. Do you think, Sir, this is poſſible?"

"How

"How do I rejoice," cried Delvile, colouring with pleaſure while he ſpoke, "in this flattering concurrence of our opinions! ſee, madam," taking from his pocket a letter, "how I have been this very morning occupied, in endeavouring to procure for Mr. Belfield ſome employment by which his education might be rendered uſeful, and his parts redound to his own credit and advantage."

He then broke the ſeal, and put into her hand a letter to a nobleman, whoſe ſon was ſoon going abroad, ſtrongly recommending Belfield to him in capacity of a tutor.

A ſympathy of ſentiment ſo ſtriking impreſſed them at the ſame moment with ſurpriſe and eſteem; Delvile earneſtly regarded her with eyes of ſpeaking admiration, while the occaſion of his notice rendered it too pleaſant to diſtreſs her, and filled her with an inward ſatisfaction which brightened her whole countenance.

She had only time, in a manner that ſtrongly marked her approbation, to return the letter, before Mrs. Delvile again made her appearance.

During the reſt of the evening but little was ſaid; Cecilia was not talkative, and young Delvile was ſo abſent, that three times his mother reminded him of an engagement to meet his father, who that night was

was expected at the Duke of Derwent's houſe in town, before he heard that ſhe ſpoke to him, and three times more before, when he had heard, he obeyed.

Cecilia, when ſhe came back to Mr. Harrel's, found the houſe full of company. She went into the drawing-room, but did not remain there long: ſhe was grave and thoughtful, ſhe wiſhed to be alone, and by the earlieſt opportunity, ſtole away to her own apartment.

Her mind was now occupied by new ideas, and her fancy was buſied in the delineation of new proſpects. She had been ſtruck from her firſt meeting young Delvile with an involuntary admiration of his manners and converſation; ſhe had found upon every ſucceeding interview ſomething further to approve, and felt for him a riſing partiality which made her always ſee him with pleaſure, and never part from him without a wiſh to ſee him again. Yet, as ſhe was not of that inflammable nature which is always ready to take fire, as her paſſions were under the controul of her reaſon, and ſhe ſuffered not her affections to triumph over her principles, ſhe ſtarted at her danger the moment ſhe perceived it, and inſtantly determined to give no weak encouragement to a prepoſſeſſion which neither time nor intimacy had juſtified. She denied

herſelf the deluding ſatisfaction of dwelling upon the ſuppoſition of his worth, was unuſually aſſiduous to occupy all her time, that her heart might have leſs leiſure for imagination; and had ſhe found that his character degenerated from the promiſe of his appearance, the well regulated purity of her mind would ſoon have enabled her to have driven him wholly from her thoughts.

Such was her ſituation when the circumſtances of her affairs occaſioned her becoming an inmate of his houſe; and here ſhe grew leſs guarded, becauſe leſs clear-ſighted to the danger of negligence, for the frequency of their converſation allowed her little time to conſider their effects. If at firſt ſhe had been pleaſed with his deportment and elegance, upon intimacy ſhe was charmed with his diſpoſition and his behaviour; ſhe found him manly, generous, open-hearted and amiable, fond of literature, delighting in knowledge, kind in his temper, and ſpirited in his actions.

Qualities ſuch as theſe, when recommended by high birth, a ſtriking figure, and poliſhed manners, formed but a dangerous companion for a young woman, who, without the guard of any former prepoſſeſſion, was ſo fervent an admirer of excellence as Cecilia. Her heart made no reſiſtance, for the attack was too gentle and too

gradual to alarm her vigilance, and therefore, though always ſenſible of the pleaſure ſhe received from his ſociety, it was not till ſhe returned to Portman-Square, after having lived under the ſame roof with him for a fortnight, that ſhe was conſcious her happineſs was no longer in her own power.

Mr. Harrel's houſe, which had never pleaſed her, now became utterly diſguſtful; ſhe was wearied and uncomfortable, yet, willing to attribute her uneaſineſs to any other than the true cauſe, ſhe fancied the houſe itſelf was changed, and that all its inhabitants and viſitors were more than uſually diſagreeable: but this idle error was of ſhort duration, the moment of ſelf-conviction was at hand, and when Delvile preſented her the letter he had written for Mr. Belfield, it flaſhed in her eyes!

This detection of the altered ſtate of her mind opened to her views and her hopes a ſcene entirely new, for neither the exertion of the moſt active benevolence, nor the ſteady courſe of the moſt virtuous conduct, ſufficed any longer to wholly engage her thoughts, or conſtitute her felicity; ſhe had purpoſes that came nearer home, and cares that threatened to abſorb in themſelves that heart and thoſe faculties which hitherto had only ſeemed animated for the ſervice of others.

Yet

Yet this loſs of mental freedom gave her not much uneaſineſs, ſince the choice of her heart, though involuntary, was approved by her principles, and confirmed by her judgment. Young Delvile's ſituation in life was juſt what ſhe wiſhed, more elevated than her own, yet not ſo exalted as to humble her with a ſenſe of inferiority; his connections were honourable, his mother appeared to her the firſt of women, his character and diſpoſition ſeemed formed to make her happy, and her own fortune was ſo large, that to the ſtate of his ſhe was indifferent.

Delighted with ſo flattering a union of inclination with propriety, ſhe now began to cheriſh the partiality ſhe at firſt had repreſſed, and thinking the future deſtination of her life already ſettled, looked forward with grateful joy to the proſpect of ending her days with the man ſhe thought moſt worthy to be entruſted with the diſpoſal of her fortune.

She had not, indeed, any certainty that the regard of young Delvile was reciprocal, but ſhe had every reaſon to believe he greatly admired her, and to ſuſpect that his miſtaken notion of her prior engagement, firſt with Mr. Belfield, and afterwards with Sir Robert Floyer, made him at preſent check thoſe ſentiments in her favour which, when that

that error was removed, she hoped to see encouraged.

Her purpose, therefore, was quietly to wait an explanation, which she rather wished retarded than forwarded, that her leisure and opportunity might be more for investigating his character, and saving herself from repentance.

CHAP. III.

A Conflict.

THE day following this happy intellectual arrangement, Cecilia was visited by Mr. Monckton. That gentleman, who had enquired for her immediately after the Harrels went to their villa, and who had flattered himself with reaping much advantage from their absence, by frequent meetings and confidential discourses, suffered the severest mortification when he found that her stay in town rendered her not the less inaccessible to him, since he had no personal acquaintance with the Delviles, and could not venture to present himself at their house.

He was now received by her with more than usual pleasure; the time had seemed long to her since she had conversed with him, and she was eager to ask his counsel and assistance in her affairs. She related to him the motives which had induced her to go to St. James' Square, and the incorrigible obstinacy with which Mr. Harrel still continued to encourage the addresses of Sir Robert Floyer; she earnestly entreated him

him to become her agent in a buſineſs to which ſhe was unequal, by expoſtulating in her cauſe with Mr. Harrel, and by calling upon Sir Robert himſelf to inſiſt upon his foregoing his unauthoriſed pretenſions.

Mr. Monckton liſtened eagerly to her account and requeſt, and when ſhe had finiſhed, aſſured her he would deliberate upon each circumſtance of the affair, and then maturely weigh every method he could deviſe, to extricate her from an embarraſſment which now grew far too ſerious to be ſafely neglected.

"I will not, however," continued he, "either act or give my opinion without further enquiry, as I am confident there is a myſtery in this buſineſs which lies deeper than we can at preſent fathom. Mr. Harrel has doubtleſs purpoſes of his own to anſwer by this pretended zeal for Sir Robert; nor is it difficult to conjecture what they may be. Friendſhip, in a man of his light caſt, is a mere cover, a mere name, to conceal a connection which has its baſis ſolely in the licentious convenience of borrowing money, going to the ſame gaming houſe, and mutually communicating and boaſting their mutual vices and intrigues, while, all the time, their regard for each other is equally hollow with their regard for truth and integrity."

He then cautioned her to be extremely careful with reſpect to any money tranſactions with Mr. Harrel, whoſe ſplendid extravagance he aſſured her was univerſally known to exceed his fortune.

The countenance of Cecilia during this exhortation was teſtimony ſufficient to the penetrating eyes of Mr. Monckton that his advice came not too ſoon: a ſuſpicion of the real ſtate of the caſe ſpeedily occurred to him, and he queſtioned her minutely upon the ſubject. She endeavoured to avoid making him any anſwer, but his diſcernment was too keen for her inartificial evaſion, and he very ſoon gathered all the particulars of her tranſactions with Mr. Harrel.

He was leſs alarmed at the ſum ſhe had lent him, which was rather within his expectations, than at the method ſhe had been induced to take to procure it. He repreſented to her in the ſtrongeſt manner the danger of impoſition, nay of ruin, from the extortions and the craft of money-lenders; and he charged her upon no conſideration to be tempted or perſuaded again to have recourſe to ſuch perilous expedients.

She promiſed the moſt attentive obſervance of his advice: and then told him the acquaintance ſhe had made with Miſs Belfield, and her ſorrow for the ſituation of her brother;

brother; though, satisfied for the present with the plan of young Delvile, she now gave up her design of soliciting his counsel.

In the midst of this conversation, a note was delivered to her from Mr. Delvile senior, acquainting her with his return to town, and begging the favour of her to call in St. James's Square the next morning, as he wished to speak to her upon some business of importance.

The eager manner in which Cecilia accepted this invitation, and her repeated and earnest exclamation of wonder at what Mr. Delvile could have to say, past not unnoticed by Mr. Monckton; he instantly turned the discourse from the Belfields, the Harrels, and the Baronet, to enquire how she had spent her time during her visit in St. James' Square, and what was her opinion of the family after her late opportunities of intimacy?

Cecilia answered that she had yet seen nothing more of Mr. Delvile, who had been absent the whole time, but with equal readiness and pleasure she replied to all his questions concerning his lady, expatiating with warmth and fervour upon her many rare and estimable qualities.

But when the same interrogatories were transferred to the son, she spoke no longer with the same ease, nor with her usual

promptitude of ſincerity; ſhe was embarraſſed, her anſwers were ſhort, and ſhe endeavoured to haſten from the ſubject.

Mr. Monckton remarked this change with the moſt apprehenſive quickneſs, but, forcing a ſmile, "Have you yet," he ſaid, "obſerved the family compact in which thoſe people are bound to beſiege you, and draw you into their ſnares?"

"No, indeed," cried Cecilia, much hurt by the queſtion, "I am ſure no ſuch compact has been formed; and I am ſure, too, that if you knew them better, you would yourſelf be the firſt to admire and do them juſtice."

"My dear Miſs Beverley," cried he, "I know them already; I do not, indeed, viſit them, but I am perfectly acquainted with their characters, which have been drawn to me by thoſe who are moſt cloſely connected with them, and who have had opportunities of inſpection which I hope will never fall to your ſhare, ſince I am ſatisfied the trial would pain, though the proof would convince you."

"What then have you heard of them?" cried Cecilia, with much earneſtneſs: "if it is, at leaſt, not poſſible any ill can be ſaid of Mrs. Delvile."

"I beg your pardon," returned he, "Mrs. Delvile is not nearer perfection than the

the reſt of her family, ſhe has only more art in diſguiſing her foibles; becauſe, tho' ſhe is the daughter of pride, ſhe is the ſlave of intereſt."

"I ſee you have been greatly misinformed," ſaid Cecilia warmly; "Mrs. Delvile is the nobleſt of women! ſhe may, indeed, from her very exaltation, have enemies, but they are the enemies of envy, not of reſentment, enemies raiſed by ſuperior merit, not excited by injury or provocation!"

"You will know her better hereafter;" ſaid Mr. Monckton calmly, "I only hope your knowledge will not be purchaſed by the ſacrifice of your happineſs."

"And what knowledge of her, Sir," cried Cecilia, ſtarting, "can have power to put my happineſs in any danger?"

"I will tell you," anſwered he, "with all the openneſs you have a claim to from my regard, and then leave to time to ſhew if I am miſtaken. The Delvile family, notwithſtanding its oſtentatious magnificence, I can ſolemnly aſſure you, is poor in every branch, alike lineal and collateral."

"But is it therefore the leſs eſtimable?"

"Yes, becauſe the more rapacious. And while they count on each ſide Dukes, Earls and Barons in their genealogy, the very wealth with which, through your means, they project the ſupport of their inſolence,

and which they will graſp with all the greedineſs of avarice, they will think honoured by being employed in their ſervice, while the inſtrument, all amiable as ſhe is, by which they attain it, will be conſtantly held down as the diſgrace of their alliance."

Cecilia, ſtung to the ſoul by this ſpeech, roſe from her chair, unwilling to anſwer it, yet unable to conceal how much it ſhocked her. Mr. Monckton, perceiving her emotion, followed her, and taking her hand, ſaid "I would not give this warning to one I thought too weak to profit from it; but as I am well informed of the uſe that is meant to be made of your fortune, and the abuſe that will follow of yourſelf, I think it right to prepare you for their artifices, which merely to point out may render abortive."

Cecilia, too much diſturbed to thank him, drew back her hand, and continued ſilent. Mr. Monckton, reading through her diſpleaſure the ſtate of her affections, ſaw with terror the greatneſs of the danger which threatened him. He found, however, that the preſent was no time for enforcing objections, and perceiving he had already gone too far, though he was by no means diſpoſed to recant, he thought it moſt prudent to retreat, and let her meditate upon his exhortation while its impreſſion was yet ſtrong in her mind.

He would now, therefore, have taken leave;

leave; but Cecilia, endeavouring to recollect herſelf, and fully perſuaded that however he had ſhocked her, he had only her intereſt in view, ſtopt him, ſaying "You think me, perhaps, ungrateful, but believe me I am not; I muſt, however, acknowledge that your cenſure of Mrs. Delvile hurts me extremely. Indeed I cannot doubt her worthineſs, I muſt ſtill, therefore, plead for her, and I hope the time may come when you will allow I have not pleaded unjuſtly."

"Juſtly or unjuſtly," anſwered Mr. Monckton, "I am at leaſt ſure you can never plead vainly. I give up, therefore, to your opinion my attack of Mrs. Delvile, and am willing from your commendations to ſuppoſe her the beſt of the race. Nay, I will even own that perhaps Mr. Delvile himſelf, as well as his lady, might paſs through life and give but little offence, had they only themſelves to think of, and no ſon to ſtimulate their arrogance."

"Is the ſon, then," ſaid Cecilia faintly, "ſo much the moſt culpable?"

"The ſon, I believe," anſwered he, "is at leaſt the chief incentive to inſolence and oſtentation in the parents, ſince it is for his ſake they covet with ſuch avidity honours and riches, ſince they plume themſelves upon regarding him as the ſupport of their

name and family, and since their pride in him even surpasses their pride in their lineage and themselves."

"Ah! thought Cecilia, and of such a son who could help being proud!"

"Their purpose, therefore," he continued, "is to secure through his means your fortune, which they will no sooner obtain, than, to my certain knowledge, they mean instantly, and most unmercifully, to employ it in repairing all their dilapidated estates."

And then he quitted the subject; and, with that guarded warmth which accompanied all his expressions, told her he would carefully watch for her honour and welfare, and, repeating his promise of endeavouring to discover the tie by which Mr. Harrel seemed bound to the Baronet, he left her,—a prey himself to an anxiety yet more severe than that with which he had filled her! He now saw all his long cherished hopes in danger of final destruction, and suddenly cast upon the brink of a precipice, where, while he struggled to protect them from falling, his eyes were dazzled by beholding them totter.

Mean while Cecilia, disturbed from the calm of soft serenity to which she had yielded every avenue of her soul, now looked forward with distrust and uneasiness, even

to

to the completion of the views which but a few minutes before had compriſed all her notions of felicity. The alliance which ſo lately had ſeemed wholly unexceptionable, now appeared teeming with objections, and threatening with difficulties. The repreſentations of Mr. Monckton had cruelly mortified her; well acquainted with his knowledge of the world, and wholly unſuſpicious of his ſelfiſh motives, ſhe gave to his aſſertions involuntary credit, and even while ſhe attempted to combat them, they made upon her mind an impreſſion ſcarce ever to be eraſed.

Full, therefore, of doubt and inquietude, ſhe paſſed the night in diſcomfort and irreſolution, now determining to give way to her feelings, and now to be wholly governed by the counſel of Mr. Monckton.

CHAP. IV.

An Expectation.

IN this diſpoſition of mind Cecilia the next morning obeyed the ſummons of Mr. Delvile, and for the firſt time went to St. James' Square in a humour to look for evil inſtead of good, and meanneſs inſtead of nobleneſs.

She was ſhewn into an apartment where ſhe found Mr. Delvile alone, and was received by him, as uſual, with the moſt ſtately ſolemnity.

When ſhe was ſeated, "I have given you, Miſs Beverley," ſaid he, "the trouble of calling, in order to diſcuſs with you the internal ſtate of your affairs; a duty which, at this juncture, I hold to be incumbent upon my character. The delicacy due to your ſex would certainly have induced me to wait upon you myſelf for this purpoſe, but for the reaſons I have already hinted to you, of fearing the people with whom you live might think it neceſſary to return my viſit. Perſons of low origin are commonly in thoſe matters the moſt forward. Not, however, that I would prejudice you againſt them;

them; though, for myself, it is fit I remember that a general and indiscriminate acquaintance, by levelling all ranks, does injury to the rites of society."

Ah! thought Cecilia, how infallible is Mr. Monckton! and how inevitably, in a family of which Mr. Delvile is the head, should I be cruelly *held down, as the disgrace of their alliance!*

"I have applied," continued he, "to Mrs. Delvile, to know if the communication which I had recommended to you, and to which she had promised her attention, had yet passed; but I am informed you have not spoken to her upon the subject."

"I had nothing, Sir, to communicate," answered Cecilia, "and I had hoped, as Mrs. Delvile made no enquiries, she was satisfied she had nothing to hear."

"With respect to enquiries," said Mr. Delvile, "I fear you are not sufficiently aware of the distance between a lady of Mrs. Delvile's rank, both by birth and alliance, and such a young woman as Mrs. Harrel, whose ancestors, but a short time since, were mere Suffolk farmers. But I beg your pardon;——I mean not any reflection upon yours; I have always heard they were very worthy people. And a farmer is certainly a very respectable person. Your father, I think,

think, no more than the Dean your uncle, did nothing in that way himself?"

"No, Sir," said Cecilia, drily, and much provoked by this contemptuous courtesy.

"I have always been told he was a very good sort of man: I knew none of the family myself, but the Dean. His connections with the Bishop of——, my relation, put him often in my way. Though his naming me for one of his trustees, I must own, was rather extraordinary; but I mean not to hurt you; on the contrary, I should be much concerned to give you any uneasiness."

Again Mr. Monckton arose in the mind of Cecilia, and again she acknowledged the truth of his strictures; and though she much wondered in what an harrangue so pompous was to end, her disgust so far conquered her curiosity, that without hearing it, she wished herself away.

"To return," said he, to my purpose. The present period of your life is such as to render advice particularly seasonable; I am sorry, therefore, as I before said, you have not disclosed your situation to Mrs. Delvile. A young lady on the point of making an establishment, and with many engagements in her power, is extremely liable to be mistaken in her judgment, and therefore should

solicit

solicit instruction from those who are able to acquaint her what connection would be most to her advantage. One thing, however, I am happy to commend, the young man who was wounded in the duel——I cannot recollect his name——is, I hear, totally out of the question."

What next? thought Cecilia, though still she gave him no interruption, for the haughtiness of his manner was repulsive to reply.

"My design, therefore, is to speak to you of Sir Robert Floyer. When I had last the pleasure of addressing you upon this subject, you may probably remember my voice was in his favour; but I then regarded him merely as the rival of an inconsiderable young man, to rescue you from whom he appeared an eligible person. The affair is now altered, that young man is thought of no more, and another rival comes forward, to whom Sir Robert is as inconsiderable as the first rival was to Sir Robert."

Cecilia started at this information, livelier sensations stimulated her curiosity, and surmises in which she was most deeply interested quickened her attention.

"This rival," proceeded he, "I should imagine no young lady would a moment hesitate in electing; he is every way the superior of Sir Robert except in fortune, and

the

the deficiencies of that the splendour of your own may amply supply."

The deepest crimson now tinged the cheeks of Cecilia; the prophecy of Mr. Monckton seemed immediately fulfilling, and she trembled with a rising conflict between her approbation of the offer, and her dread of its consequences.

"I know not, indeed," continued he, "in what estimation you may have been accustomed to hold rank and connection, nor whether you are impressed with a proper sense of their superiority and value; for early prejudices are not easily rooted out, and those who have lived chiefly with monied people, regard even birth itself as unimportant when compared with wealth."

The colour which first glowed in the cheeks of Cecilia from expectation, now rose yet higher from resentment: she thought herself already insulted by a prelude so ostentatious and humiliating to the proposals which were to follow; and she angrily determined, with whatever pain to her heart, to assert her own dignity by refusing them at once, too well satisfied by what she now saw of the present, that Mr. Monckton had been just in his prediction of the future.

"Your rejection, therefore," continued he, "of this honourable offer, may perhaps have been merely the consequence of the

the principles in which you have been educated.—

"Rejection?" interrupted Cecilia, amazed, "what rejection, Sir?"

"Have you not refused the propoſals of my Lord Ernolf for his ſon?"

"Lord Ernolf? never! nor have I ever ſeen either his Lordſhip or his ſon but in public."

"That," replied Mr. Delvile, "is little to the purpoſe; where the connexion is a proper one, a young lady of delicacy has only to accede to it. But though this rejection came not immediately from yourſelf, it had doubtleſs your concurrence."

"It had not, Sir, even my knowledge."

"Your alliance then with Sir Robert Floyer is probably nearer a concluſion than I had imagined, for otherwiſe Mr. Harrel would not, without conſulting you, have given the Earl ſo determinate an anſwer.

"No, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, impatiently, "my alliance with him was never more diſtant, nor do I mean it ſhould ever approach more near."

She was now little diſpoſed for further converſation. Her heroic deſign of refuſing young Delvile by no means reconciled her to the diſcovery ſhe now made that he had not meant to addreſs her; and though ſhe was provoked and fretted at this new proof

that

that Mr. Harrel ſcrupled neither aſſertions nor actions to make her engagement with Sir Robert credited, her diſappointment in finding that Mr. Delvile, inſtead of pleading the cauſe of his ſon, was exerting his intereſt for another perſon, affected her ſo much more nearly, that notwithſtanding he ſtill continued his parading harangue, ſhe ſcarcely knew even the ſubject of his diſcourſe, and ſeized the firſt opportunity of a ceſſation to riſe and take her leave.

He aſked her if ſhe would not call upon Mrs. Delvile; but deſirous to be alone, ſhe declined the invitation; he then charged her to proceed no further with Sir Robert till he had made ſome enquiries concerning Lord Ernolf, and graciouſly promiſing his protection and counſel, ſuffered her to depart.

Cecilia now perceived ſhe might plan her rejections, or ſtudy her dignity at her leiſure, for neither Mr. Delvile nor his ſon ſeemed in any haſte to put her fortitude to the proof. With regard, therefore, to their plots and intentions, Mr. Monckton ſhe found was wrong, but with reſpect to their conduct and ſentiments, ſhe had every reaſon to believe him right: and though her heart refuſed to rejoice in eſcaping a trial of its ſtrength, her judgment was ſo well convinced that his painting was from the life,

that

that ſhe determined to conquer her partiality for young Delvile, ſince ſhe looked forward to nothing but mortification in a connexion with his family.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

An Agitation.

WITH this intention, and every faculty of her mind abſorbed in reflecting upon the reaſons which gave riſe to it, ſhe returned to Portman-ſquare.

As her chair was carried into the hall, ſhe obſerved, with ſome alarm, a look of conſternation among the ſervants, and an appearance of confuſion in the whole houſe. She was proceeding to her own room, intending to enquire of her maid if any evil had happened, when ſhe was croſſed upon the ſtairs by Mr. Harrel, who paſſed her with an air ſo wild and perturbed, that he hardly ſeemed to know her.

Frightened and amazed, ſhe ſtopt ſhort, irreſolute which way to go; but, haſtily returning, he beckoned her to follow him.

She obeyed, and he led her to the library. He then ſhut the door, and abruptly ſeizing her hand, called out, "Miſs Beverley, I am ruined!—I am undone!—I am blaſted for ever!"

"I hope not, Sir!" ſaid Cecilia, extremely terrified, "I hope not! Where is Mrs. Harrel?"

"O

"O I know not! I know not!" cried he, in a frantic manner, "but I have not ſeen her,—I cannot ſee her,—I hope I ſhall never ſee her more!—

"O fie! fie!" ſaid Cecilia, "let me call her, I beg; you ſhould conſult with her in this diſtreſs, and ſeek comfort from her affection."

"From her affection?" repeated he, fiercely, "from her hatred you mean! do you not know that ſhe, too, is ruined? Oh paſt redemption ruined!—and yet that I ſhould heſitate, that I ſhould a moment heſitate, to conclude the whole buſineſs at once!"

"How dreadful!" cried Cecilia, "what horrible thing has happened?"

"I have undone Priſcilla!" cried he, "I have blaſted my credit! I have deſtroyed—no, not yet quite deſtroyed myſelf!"

"O yet nor ever!" cried Cecilia, whoſe agitation now almoſt equalled his own, "be not ſo deſperate, I conjure you! ſpeak to me more intelligibly,—what does all this mean? How has it come to paſs?"

"My debts!—my creditors!—one way only," ſtriking his hand upon his forehead, "is left for me!"

"Do not ſay ſo, Sir!" ſaid Cecilia, "you ſhall find many ways; pray have courage!

courage! pray ſpeak calmly; and if you will but be more prudent, will but, in future, better regulate your affairs, I will myſelf undertake——"

She ſtopt; checked in the full career of her overflowing compaſſion, by a ſenſe of the worthleſſneſs of its object; and by the remembrance of the injunctions of Mr. Monckton.

"What will you undertake?" cried he, eagerly, "I know you are an angel!—tell me, what will you undertake?

"I will,—" ſaid Cecilia, heſitating, "I will ſpeak to Mr. Monckton,—I will conſult——"

"You may as well conſult with every curſed creditor in the houſe!" interrupted he; "but do ſo, if you pleaſe; my diſgrace muſt perforce reach him ſoon, and a ſhort anticipation is not worth begging off."

"Are your creditors then actually in the houſe?"

"O yes, yes! and therefore it is high time I ſhould be out of it!—Did you not ſee them?—Do they not line the hall?—They threaten me with three executions before night!—three executions unleſs I ſatisfy their immediate demands!—"

"And to what do their demands amount?"

"I know not!—I dare not aſk!—to

ſome thouſand pounds, perhaps,—and I have not, at this minute, forty guineas in the houſe!"

"Nay, then," cried Cecilia, retreating, "I can indeed do nothing! if their demands are ſo high, I *ought* to do nothing."

She would then have quitted him, not more ſhocked at his ſituation, than indignant at the wilful extravagance which had occaſioned it.

"Stay," cried he, "and hear me!" then, lowering his voice, "ſeek out," he continued, "your unfortunate friend,—go to the poor ruined Priſcilla,—prepare her for tidings of horror! and do not, though you renounce Me, do not abandon Her!"

Then, fiercely paſſing her, he was himſelf leaving the room; but Cecilia, alarmed by the fury of his manner, called out, "What is it you mean? what tidings of horror? whither are you going?"

"To hell!" cried he, and ruſhed out of the apartment.

Cecilia ſcreamed aloud, and conjuring him to hear her, ran after him; he paid her no regard, but, flying faſter than ſhe had power to purſue, reached his own dreſſing-room, ſhut himſelf into it with violence, and juſt as ſhe arrived at the door, turned the key, and bolted it.

Her

Her terror was now inexpreſſible; ſhe believed him in the very act of ſuicide, and her refuſal of aſſiſtance ſeemed the ſignal for the deed: her whole fortune, at that moment, was valueleſs and unimportant to her, compared with the preſervation of a fellow-creature: ſhe called out with all the vehemence of agony to beg he would open the door, and eagerly promiſed by all that was ſacred to do every thing in her power to ſave him.

At theſe words he opened it; his face was totally without colour, and he graſped a razor in his hand.

"You have ſtopt me," ſaid he, in a voice ſcarce audible, "at the very moment I had gathered courage for the blow: but if indeed you will aſſiſt me, I will ſhut this up,—if not, I will ſteep it in my blood!"

"I will! I will!" cried Cecilia, "I will do every thing you deſire!"

"And quickly?"

"Immediately."

"Before my diſgrace is known? and while all may yet be huſhed up?"

"Yes, yes! all—any—every thing you wiſh!"

"Swear, then!"

Here Cecilia drew back; her recollection returned as her terror abated, and her repugnance

pugnance to entering into an engagement for ſhe knew not what, with a man whoſe actions ſhe condemned, and whoſe principles ſhe abhorred, made all her fright now give way to indignation, and, after a ſhort pauſe, ſhe angrily anſwered, "No, Sir, I will not ſwear!—but yet, all that is reaſonable, all that is friendly——"

"Hear *me* ſwear, then!" interrupted he, furiouſly, "which at this moment I do, by every thing eternal, and by every thing infernal, that I will not outlive the ſeizure of my property, and that the moment I am informed there is an execution in my houſe, ſhall be the laſt of my exiſtence!"

"What cruelty! what compulſion! what impiety!" cried Cecilia: "give me, however, that horrible inſtrument, and preſcribe to me what conditions you pleaſe."

A noiſe was now heard below ſtairs, at which Cecilia, who had not dared call for help left ſhe ſhould quicken his deſperation, was ſecretly beginning to rejoice, when, ſtarting at the ſound, he exclaimed, "I believe you are too late!—the ruffians have already ſeized my houſe!" then, endeavouring to force her out of the room, "Go," he cried, "to my wife;—I want to be alone!"

"Oh give me firſt," cried ſhe, "that

weapon, and I will take what oath you pleaſe!"

"No, no!—go,—leave me,—" cried he, almoſt breathleſs with emotion, "I muſt not now be trifled with."

"I do not trifle! indeed I do not!" cried Cecilia, holding by his arm: "try, put me to the proof!"

"Swear, ſolemnly ſwear, to empty my houſe of theſe creditors this moment!"

"I *do* ſwear," cried ſhe, with energy, "and Heaven proſper me as I am ſincere!"

"I ſee, I ſee you are an angel!" cried he, rapturouſly, "and as ſuch I worſhip and adore you! O you have reſtored me to life, and reſcued me from perdition!"

"Give me, then, that fatal inſtrument!"

"That inſtrument," returned he, "is nothing, ſince ſo many others are in my power; but you have now taken from me all deſire of uſing them. Go, then, and ſtop thoſe wretches from coming to me,—ſend immediately for the Jew!—he will advance what money you pleaſe,—my man knows where to find him;—conſult with Mr. Arnott,—ſpeak a word of comfort to Priſcilla,—but do nothing, nothing at all, till you have cleared my houſe of thoſe curſed ſcoundrels!"

Cecilia, whoſe heart ſunk within her at the ſolemn promiſe ſhe had given, the men-

tion

tion of the Jew, and the arduous taſk ſhe had undertaken, quitted him without reply, and was going to her own room, to compoſe her hurried ſpirits, and conſider what ſteps ſhe had to take, when hearing the noiſe in the hall grow louder, ſhe ſtopt to liſten, and catching ſome words that greatly alarmed her, went half way down ſtairs, when ſhe was met by Daviſon, Mr. Harrel's man, of whom ſhe enquired into the occaſion of the diſturbance.

He anſwered that he muſt go immediately to his maſter, for the bailiffs were coming into the houſe.

"Let him not know it if you value his life!" cried ſhe, with new terror. "Where is Mr. Arnott? call him to me,—beg him to come this moment;—I will wait for him here."

The man flew to obey her; and Cecilia, finding ſhe had time neither for deliberation nor regret, and dreading leſt Mr. Harrel, by hearing of the arrival of the bailiffs, ſhould relapſe into deſpair, determined to call to her aid all the courage, prudence, and judgment ſhe poſſeſſed, and, ſince to act ſhe was compelled, endeavour with her beſt ability, to ſave his credit, and retrieve his affairs."

The moment Mr. Arnott came, ſhe or-

dered Daviſon to haſten to his maſter, and watch his motions.

Then, addreſſing Mr. Arnott, "Will you, Sir," ſhe ſaid, "go and tell thoſe people that if they will inſtantly quit the houſe, every thing ſhall be ſettled, and Mr. Harrel will ſatisfy their demands?"

"Ah madam!" cried Mr. Arnott, mournfully, "and how? he has no means to pay them, and I have none—without ruin to myſelf,—to help him!"

"Send them but away," ſaid Cecilia, "and I will myſelf be your ſecurity that your promiſe ſhall not be diſgraced."

"Alas, madam," cried he, "what are you doing? well as I wiſh to Mr. Harrel, miſerable as I am for my unfortunate ſiſter, I yet cannot bear that ſuch goodneſs, ſuch beneficence ſhould be injured!"

Cecilia, however, perſiſted, and with evident reluctance he obeyed her.

While ſhe waited his return, Daviſon came from Mr. Harrel, who had ordered him to run inſtantly for the Jew.

Good Heaven, thought Cecilia, that a man ſo wretchedly ſelfiſh and worldly, ſhould dare, with all his guilt upon his head,

To ruſh unlicenced on eternity! *.

* Maſon's Elfrida.

Mr.

Mr. Arnott was more than half an hour with the people; and when, at laſt, he returned, his countenance immediately proclaimed the ill ſucceſs of his errand. The creditors, he ſaid, declared they had ſo frequently been deceived, that they would not diſmiſs the bailiffs, or retire themſelves, without actual payment.

"Tell them, then, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, "to ſend me their accounts, and, if it be poſſible, I will diſcharge them directly."

Mr. Arnott's eyes were filled with tears at this declaration, and he proteſted, be the conſequence to himſelf what it might, he would pay away every ſhilling he was worth, rather than witneſs ſuch injuſtice.

"No," cried Cecilia, exerting more ſpirit, that ſhe might ſhock him leſs, "I did not ſave Mr. Harrel, to deſtroy ſo much better a man! you have ſuffered but too much oppreſſion already; the preſent evil is mine; and from me, at leaſt, none I hope will ever ſpread to Mr. Arnott."

Mr. Arnott could not bear this; he was ſtruck with grief, with admiration, and with gratitude, and finding his tears now refuſed to be reſtrained, he went to execute her commiſſion in ſilent dejection.

The dejection, however, was encreaſed, though his tears were diſperſed, when he

returned; "Oh madam!" he cried, "all your efforts, generous as they are, will be of no avail! the bills even now in the houſe amount to more than 7000*l.*!"

Cecilia, amazed and confounded, ſtarted and claſped her hands, calling out, "What muſt I do! to what have I bound myſelf! and how can I anſwer to my conſcience,—to my ſucceſſors, ſuch a diſpoſal, ſuch an abuſe of ſo large a part of my fortune!"

Mr. Arnott could make no anſwer; and they ſtood looking at each other in ſilent irreſolution, till Daviſon brought intelligence that the Jew was already come, and waited to ſpeak with her.

"And what can I ſay to him?" cried ſhe, more and more agitated; "I underſtand nothing of uſury; how am I to deal with him?"

Mr. Arnott then confeſſed that he ſhould himſelf have inſtantly been bail for his brother, but that his fortune, originally not large, was now ſo much impaired by the many debts which from time to time he had paid for him, that as he hoped ſome day to have a family of his own, he dared not run a riſk by which he might be utterly ruined, and the leſs, as his ſiſter had at Violet Bank been prevailed upon to give up her ſettlement.

This account, which explained the late uneaſineſs

uneaſineſs of Mrs. Harrel, ſtill encreaſed the diſtreſs of Cecilia; and every moment ſhe obtained for reflection, augmented her reluctance to parting with ſo large a ſum of money for ſo worthleſs an object, and added ſtrength to her reſentment for the unjuſtifiable menaces which had extorted from her ſuch a promiſe. Yet not an inſtant would ſhe liſten to Mr. Arnott's offer of fulfilling her engagement, and charged him, as he conſidered her own ſelf-eſteem worth her keeping, not to urge to her a propoſal ſo ungenerous and ſelfiſh.

Daviſon now came again to haſten her, and ſaid that the Jew was with his maſter, and they both impatiently expected her.

Cecilia, half diſtracted with her uncertainty how to act, changed colour at this meſſage, and exclaimed "Oh Mr. Arnott, run I beſeech you for Mr. Monckton! bring him hither directly,—if any body can ſave me it is him; but if I go back to Mr. Harrel, I know it will be all over!"

"Certainly," ſaid Mr. Arnott, "I will run to him this moment."

"Yet no!—ſtop!—" cried the trembling Cecilia, "he can now do me no good,—his counſel will arrive too late to ſerve me,—it cannot call back the oath I have given! it cannot, compulſatory as it

was, make me break it, and not be miſerable for ever!"

This idea ſufficed to determine her; and the apprehenſion of ſelf-reproach, ſhould the threat of Mr. Harrel be put in execution, was more inſupportable to her blameleſs and upright mind, than any loſs or diminution which her fortune could ſuſtain.

Slowly however, with tardy and unwilling ſteps, her judgment repugnant, and her ſpirit repining, ſhe obeyed the ſummons of Mr. Harrel, who, impatient of her delay, came forward to meet her.

"Miſs Beverley," he cried, "there is not a moment to be loſt; this good man will bring you any ſum of money, upon a proper conſideration, that you will command; but if he is not immediately commiſſioned, and theſe curſed fellows are not got out of my houſe, the affair will be blown," —— and what will follow, added he, lowering his voice, "I will not again frighten you by repeating, though I ſhall never recant."

Cecilia turned from him in horror; and, with a faltering voice and heavy heart, entreated Mr. Arnott to ſettle for her with the Jew.

Large as was the ſum, ſhe was ſo near being of age, and her ſecurity was ſo good, that

that the tranſaction was ſoon finiſhed: 7500*l.* was received of the Jew, Mr. Harrel gave Cecilia his bond for the payment, the creditors were ſatisfied, the bailiffs were diſmiſſed, and the houſe was ſoon reſtored to its cuſtomary appearance of ſplendid gaiety.

Mrs. Harrel, who during this ſcene had ſhut herſelf up in her own room to weep and lament, now flew to Cecilia, and in a tranſport of joy and gratitude, thanked her upon her knees for thus preſerving her from utter ruin: the gentle Mr. Arnott ſeemed uncertain whether moſt to grieve or rejoice; and Mr. Harrel repeatedly proteſted ſhe ſhould have the ſole guidance of his future conduct.

This promiſe, the hope of his amendment, and the joy ſhe had expanded, ſomewhat revived the ſpirits of Cecilia; who, however, deeply affected by what had paſſed, haſtened from them all to her own room.

She had now parted with 8050*l.* to Mr. Harrel, without any ſecurity when or how it was to be paid; and that ardour of benevolence which taught her to value her riches merely as they enabled her to do good and generous actions, was here of no avail to conſole or reward her, for her gift was compelled, and its receiver was all but deteſted. "How much better," cried ſhe,

" would this have been beſtowed upon the amiable Miſs Belfield! or upon her noble-minded, though proud-ſpirited brother! and how much leſs a ſum would have made the virtuous and induſtrious Hills eaſy and happy for life! but here, to become the tool of the extravagance I abhor! to be made reſponſible for the luxury I condemn! to be liberal in oppoſition to my principles, and laviſh in defiance of my judgment! Oh that my much-deceived Uncle had better known to what dangerous hands he committed me! and that my weak and unhappy friend had met with a worthier protector of her virtue and ſafety!"

As ſoon, however, as ſhe recovered from the firſt ſhock of her reflections, ſhe turned her thoughts from herſelf to the formation of ſome plan that might, at leaſt, render her donation of ſerious and laſting uſe. The ſignal ſervice ſhe had juſt done them gave her at preſent an aſcendency over the Harvels, which ſhe hoped, if immediately exerted, might prevent the return of ſo calamitous a ſcene, by engaging them both to an immediate change of conduct. But unequal herſelf to contriving expedients for this purpoſe that might not eaſily be controverted, ſhe determined to ſend the next morning a petition to Mr. Monckton to call upon her, reveal to him the whole tranſaction,

tranſaction, and entreat him to ſuggeſt to her what, with moſt probability of ſucceſs, ſhe might offer to their conſideration.

While this was paſſing in her mind, on the evening of the day in which ſhe had ſo dearly purchaſed the right of giving counſel, ſhe was ſummoned to tea.

She found Mr. Harrel and his lady engaged in earneſt diſcourſe; as ſoon as ſhe appeared, the former ſaid, "My dear Miſs Beverley, after the extraordinary kindneſs you have ſhewn me this morning, you will not, I am ſure, deny me one trifling favour which I mean to aſk this evening."

"No," ſaid Mrs. Harrel, "that I am ſure ſhe will not, when ſhe knows that our future appearance in the world depends upon her granting it."

"I hope, then," ſaid Cecilia, "I ſhall not wiſh to refuſe it."

"It is nothing in the world," ſaid Mr. Harrel, "but to go with us to-night to the Pantheon.

Cecilia was ſtruck with the utmoſt indignation at this propoſal; that the man who in the morning had an execution in his houſe, ſhould languiſh in the evening for the amuſement of a public place,—that he who but a few hours before was plunging uncalled into eternity, ſhould, while the intended inſtrument of death was yet ſcarce

cold from the graſp of his hand, deliberately court a return of his diſtreſs, by inſtantly recurring to the methods which had involved him in it, irritated and ſhocked her beyond even a wiſh of diſguiſing her diſpleaſure, and therefore, after an expreſſive ſilence, ſhe gave a cold, but abſolute denial.

"I ſee," ſaid Mr. Harrel, ſomewhat confuſed, "you do not underſtand the motives of our requeſt. The unfortunate affair of this morning is very likely to ſpread preſently all over the town; the only refutation that can be given to it, is by our all appearing in public before any body knows whether to believe it or not."

"Do, my deareſt friend," cried his lady, "oblige me by your compliance; indeed our whole reputation depends upon it. I made an engagement yeſterday to go with Mrs. Mears, and if I diſappoint her, every body will be gueſſing the reaſon."

"At leaſt," anſwered Cecilia, "*my* going can anſwer no purpoſe to you: pray, therefore, do not aſk me; I am ill diſpoſed for ſuch ſort of amuſement, and have by no means your opinion of its neceſſity."

"But if we do not *all* go," ſaid Mr. Harrel, "we do almoſt nothing: you are known to live with us, and your appearance at this critical time is important to our credit. If this misfortune gets wind, the

conſequence is that every dirty tradeſman in town to whom I owe a ſhilling, will be forming the ſame curſed combination thoſe ſcoundrels formed this morning, of coming in a body, and waiting for their money, or elſe bringing an execution into my houſe. The only way to ſilence report is by putting a good face upon the matter at once, and ſhewing ourſelves to the world as if nothing had happened. Favour us, therefore, to-night with your company, which is really important to us, or ten to one, but in another fortnight, I ſhall be juſt in the ſame ſcrape."

Cecilia, however incenſed at this intelligence that his debts were ſtill ſo numerous, felt now as much alarmed at the mention of an execution, as if ſhe was in actual danger of ruin herſelf. Terrified, therefore, though not convinced, ſhe yielded to their perſuaſions, and conſented to accompany them.

They ſoon after ſeparated to make ſome alteration in their dreſs, and then, calling in their way for Mrs. Mears, they proceeded to the Pantheon.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

A MAN OF THE TON.

AT the door of the Pantheon they were joined by Mr. Arnott and Sir Robert Floyer, whom Cecilia now ſaw with added averſion: they entered the great room during the ſecond act of the Concert, to which as no one of the party but herſelf had any deſire to liſten, no ſort of attention was paid; the ladies entertaining themſelves as if no Orcheſtra was in the room, and the gentlemen, with an equal diſregard to it, ſtruggling for a place by the fire, about which they continued hovering till the muſic was over.

Soon after they were ſeated, Mr. Meadows, ſauntering towards them, whiſpered ſomething to Mrs. Mears, who, immediately riſing, introduced him to Cecilia; after which, the place next to her being vacant, he caſt himſelf upon it, and lolling as much at his eaſe as his ſituation would permit, began ſomething like a converſation with her.

"Have you been long in town, ma'am?"

"No, Sir."

"This is not your firſt winter?"

"Of

"Of being in town, it is."

"Then you have something new to see; O charming! how I envy you!—Are you pleased with the Pantheon?"

"Very much; I have seen no building at all equal to it."

"You have not been abroad. Travelling is the ruin of all happiness! There's no looking at a building here after seeing Italy."

"Does all happiness, then, depend upon the sight of buildings?" said Cecilia, when, turning towards her companion, she perceived him yawning, with such evident inattention to her answer, that not chusing to interrupt his reverie, she turned her head another way.

For some minutes he took no notice of this; and then, as if suddenly recollecting himself, he called out hastily "I beg your pardon, ma'am, you were saying something?"

"No, Sir, nothing worth repeating."

"O pray don't punish me so severely as not to let me hear it!"

Cecilia, though merely not to seem offended at his negligence, was then again beginning an answer, when, looking at him as she spoke, she perceived that he was biting his nails with so absent an air, that he appeared not to know he had asked any question.

queſtion. She therefore broke off, and left him to his cogitation.

Sometime after he addreſſed her again, ſaying "Don't you find this place extremely tireſome, ma'am?"

"Yes, Sir," ſaid ſhe, half laughing, "it is, indeed, not very entertaining!"

"Nothing is entertaining," anſwered he, "for two minutes together. Things are ſo little different one from another, that there is no making pleaſure out of any thing. We go the ſame dull round for ever; nothing new, no variety! all the ſame thing over again! Are you fond of public places, ma'am?"

"Yes, Sir, *ſoberly*, as Lady Grace ſays."

"Then I envy you extremely, for you have ſome amuſement always in your own power. How deſirable that is!"

"And have not you the ſame reſources?"

"O no! I am tired to death! tired of every thing! I would give the univerſe for a diſpoſition leſs difficult to pleaſe. Yet, after all, what is there to give pleaſure? When one has ſeen one thing, one has ſeen every thing. O, 'tis heavy work! Don't you find it ſo ma'am?"

This ſpeech was ended with ſo violent a fit of yawning, that Cecilia would not trouble herſelf to anſwer it; but her ſilence,

as

as before, passed wholly unnoticed, exciting neither question nor comment.

A long pause now succeeded, which he broke at last, by saying, as he writhed himself about upon his seat, "These forms would be much more agreeable if there were backs to them. 'Tis intolerable to be forced to sit like a school-boy. The first study of life is ease. There is, indeed, no other study that pays the trouble of attainment. Don't you think so, ma'am?"

"But may not even that," said Cecilia, "by so much study, become labour?"

"I am vastly happy you think so."

"Sir?"

"I beg your pardon, ma'am, but I thought you said——I really beg your pardon, but I was thinking of something else."

"You did very right, Sir," said Cecilia, laughing, "for what I said by no means merited any attention."

"Will you do me the favour to repeat it?" cried he, taking out his glass to examine some lady at a distance.

"O no," said Cecilia, "that would be trying your patience too severely."

"These glasses shew one nothing but defects," said he, "I am sorry they were ever invented. They are the ruin of all beauty; no complexion can stand them. I believe

believe that ſolo will never be over! I hate a ſolo; it ſinks, it depreſſes me intolerably."

"You will preſently, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, looking at the bill of the concert, "have a full piece; and that, I hope, will revive you."

"A full piece! oh inſupportable! it ſtuns, it fatigues, it overpowers me beyond endurance! no taſte in it, no delicacy, no room for the ſmalleſt feeling."

"Perhaps, then, you are only fond of ſinging?"

"I ſhould be, if I could hear it; but we are now ſo miſerably off in voices, that I hardly ever attempt to liſten to a ſong, without fancying myſelf deaf from the feebleneſs of the performers. I hate every thing that requires attention. Nothing gives pleaſure that does not force its own way."

"You only, then, like loud voices, and great powers?"

"O worſe and worſe! —— no, nothing is ſo diſguſting to me. All my amazement is that theſe people think it worth while to give Concerts at all; one is ſick to death of muſic."

"Nay," cried Cecilia, "if it gives no pleaſure, at leaſt it takes none away; for, far from being any impediment to converſation,

ſation, I think every body talks more during the performance than between the acts. And what is there better you could ſubſtitute in its place?"

Cecilia, receiving no anſwer to this queſtion, again looked round to ſee if ſhe had been heard; when ſhe obſerved her new acquaintance, with a very thoughtful air, had turned from her to fix his eyes upon the ſtatue of Britannia.

Very ſoon after, he haſtily aroſe, and ſeeming entirely to forget that he had ſpoke to her, very abruptly walked away.

Mr. Golport, who was advancing to Cecilia, and had watched part of this ſcene, ſtopt him as he was retreating, and ſaid "Why Meadows, how's this? are you caught at laſt?"

"O worn to death! worn to a thread!" cried he, ſtretching himſelf, and yawning; "I have been talking with a young lady to entertain her! O ſuch heavy work! I would not go through it again for millions!"

"What, have you talked yourſelf out of breath?"

"No; but the effort! the effort!—O, it has unhinged me for a fortnight!—Entertaining a young lady!—one had better be a galley-ſlave at once!"

"Well but, did ſhe not pay your tolls? She is ſurely a ſweet creature."

"Nothing

"Nothing can pay one for such insufferable exertion! though she's well enough, too, —better than the common run, — but shy, quite too shy; no drawing her out."

"I thought that was to your taste. You commonly hate much volubility. How have I heard you bemoan yourself when attacked by Miss Larolles!"

"Larolles? O distraction! She talks me into a fever in two minutes. But so it is for ever! nothing but extremes to be met with! common girls are too forward, this lady is too reserved—— always some fault! always some drawback! nothing ever perfect!"

"Nay, nay," cried Mr. Gosport, "you do not know her; she is perfect enough in all conscience."

"Better not know her, then," answered he, again yawning, "for she cannot be pleasing. Nothing perfect is natural; — I hate every thing out of nature."

He then strolled on, and Mr. Gosport approached Cecilia.

"I have been wishing," cried he, "to address you this half hour, but as you were engaged with Mr. Meadows, I did not dare advance."

"O, I see your malice!" cried Cecilia; "you were determined to add weight to the value of your company, by making me fully,

fully ſenſible where the balance would preponderate."

"Nay, if you do not admire Mr. Meadows," cried he, "you muſt not even whiſper it to the winds."

"Is he, then, ſo very admirable?"

"O, he is now in the very height of faſhionable favour: his dreſs is a model, his manners are imitated, his attention is courted, and his notice is envied."

"Are you not laughing?"

"No, indeed; his privileges are much more extenſive than I have mentioned: his deciſion fixes the exact limits between what is vulgar and what is elegant, his praiſe gives reputation, and a word from him in public confers faſhion!"

"And by what wonderful powers has he acquired ſuch influence?"

"By nothing but a happy art in catching the reigning foibles of the times, and carrying them to an extreme yet more abſurd than any one had done before him. Ceremony, he found, was already exploded for eaſe, he, therefore, exploded eaſe for indolence; devotion to the fair ſex, had given way to a more equal and rational intercourſe, which, to puſh ſtill farther, he preſently exchanged for rudeneſs; joviality, too, was already baniſhed for philoſophical

loſophical indifference, and that, therefore, he diſcarded, for wearineſs and diſguſt."

"And is it poſſible that qualities ſuch as theſe ſhould recommend him to favour and admiration?"

"Very poſſible, for qualities ſuch as theſe conſtitute the preſent taſte of the times. A man of the *Ton*, who would now be conſpicuous in the gay world, muſt invariably be inſipid, negligent, and ſelfiſh."

"Admirable requiſites!" cried Cecilia; "and Mr. Meadows, I acknowledge, ſeems to have attained them all."

"He muſt never," continued Mr. Goſport, "confeſs the leaſt pleaſure from any thing, a total apathy being the chief ingredient of his character: he muſt, upon no account, ſuſtain a converſation with any ſpirit, leſt he ſhould appear, to his utter diſgrace, intereſted in what is ſaid: and when he is quite tired of his exiſtence, from a total vacuity of ideas, he muſt affect a look of abſence, and pretend, on the ſudden, to be wholly loſt in thought."

"I would not wiſh," ſaid Cecilia, laughing, "a more amiable companion!"

"If he is aſked his opinion of any lady," he continued, "he muſt commonly anſwer by a grimace; and if he is ſeated next to one, he muſt take the utmoſt pains to ſhew

by

by his liſtleſsneſs, yawning and inattention, that he is ſick of his ſituation; for what he holds of all things to be moſt gothic, is gallantry to the women. To avoid this is, indeed, the principal ſolicitude of his life. If he ſees a lady in diſtreſs for her carriage, he is to enquire of her what is the matter, and then, with a ſhrug, wiſh her well through her fatigues, wink at ſome bye-ſtander, and walk away. If he is in a room where there is a crowd of company, and a ſcarcity of ſeats, he muſt early enſure one of the beſt in the place, be blind to all looks of fatigue, and deaf to all hints of aſſiſtance, and ſeeming totally to forget himſelf, lounge at his eaſe, and appear an unconſcious ſpectator of what is going forward. If he is at a ball where there are more women than men, he muſt decline dancing at all, though it ſhould happen to be his favourite amuſement, and ſmiling as he paſſes the diſengaged young ladies, wonder to ſee them ſit ſtill, and perhaps aſk them the reaſon!"

"A moſt alluring character indeed!" cried Cecilia; "and pray how long have theſe been the accompliſhments of a fine gentleman?"

"I am but an indifferent chronologer of the modes," he anſwered, "but I know it has been long enough to raiſe juſt expectations

tions that ſome new folly will be ſtarted ſoon, by which the preſent race of INSENSIBLISTS may be driven out. Mr. Meadows is now at the head of this ſect, as Miſs Larolles is of the VOLUBLE, and Miſs Leeſon of the SUPERCILIOUS. But this way comes another, who, though in a different manner, labours with the ſame view, and aſpires at the ſame reward, which ſtimulate the ambition of this happy *Triplet*, that of exciting wonder by peculiarity, and envy by wonder.

This deſcription announced Capt. Areſby; who, advancing from the fire-place, told Cecilia how much he rejoiced in ſeeing her, ſaid he had been *reduced to deſpair* by ſo long miſſing that honour, and that he had feared ſhe *made it a principle* to avoid coming in public, having ſought her in vain *partout*.

He then ſmiled, and ſtrolled on to another party.

"And pray of what ſect," ſaid Cecilia, "is this gentleman?"

"Of the ſect of JARGONISTS," anſwered Mr. Goſport; he has not an ambition beyond paying a paſſing compliment, nor a word to make uſe of that he has not picked up at public places. Yet this dearth of language, however you may deſpiſe it, is not merely owing to a narrow capacity: foppery

foppery and conceit have their ſhare in the limitation, for though his phraſes are almoſt always ridiculous or miſapplied, they are ſelected with much ſtudy, and introduced with infinite pains."

"Poor man!" cried Cecilia, "is it poſſible it can coſt him any trouble to render himſelf ſo completely abſurd?"

"Yes; but not more than it coſts his neighbours to keep him in countenance. Miſs Leeſon, ſince ſhe has preſided over the ſect of the SUPERCILIOUS, ſpends at leaſt half her life in wiſhing the annihilation of the other half; for as ſhe muſt only ſpeak in her own Coterie, ſhe is compelled to be frequently ſilent, and therefore, having nothing to think of, ſhe is commonly gnawn with ſelf-denial, and ſoured with want of amuſement: Miſs Larolles, indeed, is better off, for in talking faſter than ſhe thinks, ſhe has but followed the natural bent of her diſpoſition: as to this poor JARGONIST, he has, I muſt own, rather a hard taſk, from the continual reſtraint of ſpeaking only out of his own Liliputian vocabulary, and denying himſelf the relief of ever uttering one word by the call of occaſion: but what hardſhip is that, compared with what is borne by Mr. Meadows? who, ſince he commenced INSENSIBLIST, has never once dared to be

pleaſed, nor ventured for a moment to look in good humour!"

"Surely, then," ſaid Cecilia, "in a ſhort time, the puniſhment of this affectation will bring its cure."

"No; for the trick grows into habit, and habit is a ſecond nature. A ſecret idea of fame makes his forbearance of happineſs ſupportable to him: for he has now the ſelf-ſatisfaction of conſidering himſelf raiſed to that higheſt pinnacle of faſhionable refinement which is built upon apathy and ſcorn, and from which, proclaiming himſelf ſuperior to all poſſibility of enjoyment, he views the whole world with contempt! holding neither beauty, virtue, wealth nor power of importance ſufficient to kindle the ſmalleſt emotion!"

"O that they could all round liſten to you!" cried Cecilia; "they would ſoon, I think, ſicken of their folly, if they heard it thus admirably expoſed."

"No; they would but triumph that it had obtained them ſo much notice!—But pray do you ſee that gentleman, or don't you chuſe to know him, who has been bowing to you this half hour?"

"Where?" cried Cecilia, and, looking round, perceived Mr. Morrice; who, upon her returning his ſalutation, inſtantly approached her, though he had never ventured

ed to ſhew himſelf at Mr. Harrel's, ſince his unfortunate accident on the evening of the maſquerade.

Entirely caſting aſide the eaſy familiarity at which he had latterly arrived, he enquired after her health with the moſt fearful diffidence, and then, bowing profoundly, was modeſtly retiring; when Mrs. Harrel, perceiving him, ſmiled with ſo much good-humour, that he gathered courage to return and addreſs her, and found her, to his infinite delight, as obliging and civil as ever.

The Concert was now over; the ladies aroſe, and the gentlemen joined them. Morrice, at ſight of Mr. Harrel, was again ſhrinking; but Mr. Harrel, immediately ſhaking hands with him, enquired what had kept him ſo long from Portman-Square? Morrice then, finding, to his great ſurpriſe, that no one had thought more of the miſchief but himſelf who had committed it, joyouſly diſcarded his timidity, and became as ſprightly as before his mortification.

A motion was now made for going to the tea-room; and as they walked on, Cecilia, in looking up to examine the building, ſaw in one of the galleries young Delvile, and almoſt at the ſame time caught his eye.

Scarcely now did a moment elapſe before he joined her. The ſight of him, ſtrongly

reviving in her mind the painful contrariety of opinion with which ſhe had lately thought of him, the ſentiments ſo much in his favour which but a few days before ſhe had encouraged, and which it was only that morning ſhe had endeavoured to cruſh, made her meet him with a kind of melancholy that almoſt induced her to lament he was amiable, and repine that ſhe knew none like him.

His appearance, mean time, was far different; he ſeemed enchanted at the ſight of her, he flew eagerly to meet her, and his eyes ſparkled with pleaſure as he approached her; a pleaſure neither moderate nor diſguiſed, but lively, unreſtrained, and expreſſive.

Cecilia, whoſe plans ſince ſhe had laſt ſeen him had twice varied, who firſt had looked forward to being united with him for ever, and afterwards had determined to avoid with him even a common acquaintance, could not, while theſe thoughts were all recurring to her memory, receive much delight from obſerving his gaiety, or feel at all gratified by his unembarraſſed manners. The openneſs of his attentions, and the frankneſs of his admiration, which hitherto had charmed her as marks of the ſincerity of his character, now ſhocked her as proofs of the indifference of his heart, which feeling

ing for her a mere common regard, that affected neither his ſpirits nor his peace, he manifeſted without ſcruple, ſince it was not accompanied with even a wiſh beyond the preſent hour.

She now, too, recollected that ſuch had always been his conduct, one ſingle and ſingular moment excepted, when, as he gave to her his letter for Mr. Belfield, he ſeemed ſtruck as ſhe was herſelf by the extraordinary co-incidence of their ideas and proceedings: that emotion, however, ſhe now regarded as caſual and tranſitory, and ſeeing him ſo much happier than herſelf, ſhe felt aſhamed of her deluſion, and angry at her eaſy captivation.

Reflections ſuch as theſe, though they added freſh motives to her reſolution of giving up all thoughts of his alliance, were yet ſo humiliating, that they robbed her of all power of receiving pleaſure from what was paſſing, and made her forget that the place ſhe was in was even intended for a place of entertainment.

Young Delvile, after painting in lively colours the loſs his houſe had ſuſtained by her quitting it, and dwelling with equal force upon the regret of his mother and his own, aſked in a low voice if ſhe would do him ſo much honour as to introduce him to Mr. Harrel; "As the ſon," added he, of

a brother guardian, I think I have a kind of claim to his acquaintance."

Cecilia could not refuſe, though as the requeſt was likely to occaſion more frequent meetings, ſhe perſuaded herſelf ſhe was unwilling to comply. The ceremony therefore paſt, and was again repeated with Mrs. Harrel, who, though ſhe had ſeveral times ſeen him, had never been formally made known to him.

The Harrels were both of them much pleaſed at this mark of civility in a young man whoſe family had prepared them rather to expect his ſcorn, and expreſſed their wiſhes that he would drink his tea in their party; he accepted their invitation with alacrity, and turning to Cecilia, ſaid "Have I not ſkilfully timed my introduction? But though you have done me this honour with Mr. and Mrs. Harrel, I muſt not yet, I preſume, entreat you to extend it to a certain happy gentleman of this company;" glancing his eyes towards Sir Robert Floyer.

"No, Sir," anſwered ſhe, with quickneſs, "yet, nor ever!"

They were now at the door leading down ſtairs to the tea-room. Cecilia ſaw that Sir Robert, who had hitherto been engaged with ſome gentlemen, ſeemed to be ſeeking her; and the remembrance of the quarrel which had

had followed her refuſal of his aſſiſtance at the Opera-houſe, obliged her to determine, ſhould he offer it again, to accept it: but the ſame brutality which forced this intention, contributed to render it repugnant to her, and ſhe reſolved if poſſible to avoid him, by hurrying down ſtairs before he reached her. She made, therefore, a ſudden attempt to ſlip through the crowd, and as ſhe was light and active, ſhe eaſily ſucceeded; but though her haſty motion ſeparated her from the reſt of her party, Delvile, who was earneſtly looking at her, to diſcover her meaning in the diſclaiming ſpeech ſhe made about Sir Robert, ſaw into her deſign, but ſuffered her not to go alone; he contrived in a moment to follow and join her, while ſhe was ſtopping at the foot of the ſtairs for Mrs. Harrel.

"Why what a little thief you are," cried he, "to run away from us thus! what do you think Sir Robert will ſay? I ſaw him looking for you at the very inſtant of your flight."

"Then you ſaw at the ſame time," ſaid Cecilia, "the reaſon of it."

"Will you give me leave," cried he, laughing, "to repeat this to my Lord Ernolf?"

"You may repeat it, Sir, if you pleaſe," ſaid Cecilia, piqued that he had not ra-

ther thought of himſelf than of Lord Ernolf, "to the whole Pantheon."

"And if I ſhould," cried he, "half of it, at leaſt, would thank me; and to obtain the applauſe of ſo noble an aſſembly, what would it ſignify that Sir Robert ſhould cut my throat?"

"I believe," ſaid Cecilia, deeply mortified by a raillery that ſhewed ſo little intereſt in her avowal of indifference, "you are determined to make me as ſick of that man's name, as I am of his converſation."

"And is it poſſible," exclaimed Delvile, in a tone of ſurpriſe, "that ſuch can be your opinion, and yet, ſituated as you are, the whole world at your command, and all mankind at your devotion——but I am anſwering you ſeriouſly, when you are only ſpeaking by rule."

"What rule, Sir?"

"That which young ladies, upon certain occaſions, always preſcribe themſelves."

Here they were interrupted by the arrival of the reſt of the company; though not before Cecilia had received ſome little conſolation for her diſpleaſure, by finding that young Delvile ſtill ſuppoſed ſhe was engaged, and flattering herſelf his language would be different were he informed of the contrary.

Morrice now undertook to procure them a table

a table for tea, which, as the room was very full, was not eaſily done; and while they were waiting his ſucceſs, Miſs Larolles, who from the ſtairs had perceived Cecilia, came running up to her, and taking her hand, called out "Lord, my dear creature, who'd have thought of ſeeing you here? I was never ſo ſurpriſed in my life! I really thought you was gone into a convent, it's ſo extreme long ſince I've ſeen you. But of all things in the world, why was you not at Lady Nyland's laſt aſſembly? I thought of aſking Mrs. Harrel fifty times why you did not come, but it always went out of my head. You've no notion how exceſſively I was diſappointed."

"You are very obliging," ſaid Cecilia laughing, "but I hope, ſince you ſo often forgot it, the diſappointment did much leſſen your entertainment."

"O Lord no! I was never ſo happy in my life. There was ſuch a crowd, you could not move a finger. Every body in the world was there. You've no idea how delightful it was. I thought verily I ſhould have fainted with the heat."

"That was delightful indeed! And how long did you ſtay?"

"Why we danced till three in the morning. We began with Cotillons, and finiſhed with country dances. It was the moſt

elegant thing you ever ſaw in your life; every thing quite in a ſtyle. I was ſo monſtrouſly fatigued, I could hardly get through the laſt dance. I really thought I ſhould have dropt down dead. Only conceive dancing five hours in ſuch a monſtrous crowd! I aſſure you when I got home my feet were all bliſters. You have no idea how they ſmarted."

"And whence comes it," cried young Delvile, "that *you* partake ſo little of theſe delights?"

"Becauſe I fear," anſwered Cecilia, I came too late into the ſchool of faſhion to be a ductile pupil."

"Do you know," continued Miſs Larolles, "Mr. Meadows has not ſpoke one word to me all the evening! Though I am ſure he ſaw me, for I ſat at the outſide on purpoſe to ſpeak to a perſon or two, that I knew would be ſtrolling about; for if one ſits on the inſide, there's no ſpeaking to a creature, you know, ſo I never do it at the Opera, nor in the boxes at Ranelagh, nor any where. It's the ſhockingeſt thing you can conceive to be made ſit in the middle of thoſe forms; one might as well be at home, for nobody can ſpeak to one."

"But you don't ſeem to have had much better ſucceſs," ſaid Cecilia, "in keeping at the outſide."

"O

"O yes I have, for I got a little chat with two or three people as they were paſſing, for, you know, when one ſits there, they can't help ſaying ſomething; though I aſſure you all the men are ſo exceſſively odd they don't care whether they ſpeak to one or no. As to Mr. Meadows, he's really enough to provoke one to death. I ſuppoſe he's in one of his abſent fits. However, I aſſure you I think it's extreme impertinent of him, and ſo I ſhall tell Mr. Sawyer, for I know he'll make a point of telling him of it again."

"I rather think," ſaid Cecilia, "the beſt would be to return the compliment in kind, and when he next recollects you, appear to have forgotten him."

"O Lord, that's a very good notion! ſo I will, I edclare. But you can't conceive how glad I am the Concert's over; for I aſſure you, though I ſat as near the fire as poſſible, I was ſo extreme cold you've no idea, for Mr. Meadows never would let me have the leaſt peep at it. I declare I believe he does it on purpoſe to plague one, for he grows worſe and worſe every day. You can't think how I hate him!"

"Not eaſily, I believe indeed!" ſaid Cecilia, archly.

"O do but look!" reſumed the fair VOLUBLE, "if there is not Mrs. Mears

in her old red gown again! I begin to think ſhe'll never have another. I wiſh ſhe was to have an execution in her houſe, if it was only to get rid of it! I am ſo fatigued with the ſight of it you can't conceive."

Mr. Morrice now brought intelligence that he had ſecured one ſide of a table which would very well accommodate the ladies; and that the other ſide was only occupied by one gentleman, who, as he was not drinking tea himſelf, would doubtleſs give up his place when the party appeared.

Miſs Larolles then ran back to her own ſet, and the reſt followed Mr. Morrice: Mrs. Harrel, Mrs. Mears and Cecilia took their places. The gentleman oppoſite to them proved to be Mr. Meadows: Morrice, therefore, was much deceived in his expectations, for, far from giving up his place, he had flung himſelf all along upon the form in ſuch a lounging poſture, while he reſted one arm upon the table, that, not contented with merely keeping his own ſeat, he filled up a ſpace meant for three.

Mr. Harrel had already walked off to another party: Delvile ſtood aloof for ſome minutes, expecting Sir Robert Floyer would ſtation himſelf behind Cecilia; but Sir Robert, who would ſcarce have thought ſuch a condeſcenſion due to a princeſs, diſdained any appearance of aſſiduity, even while he made

made it his care to publiſh his pretenſions: and therefore, finding no accommodation to pleaſe him, he ſtalked towards ſome gentlemen in another part of the room. Delvile then took the poſt he had neglected, and Mr. Arnott, who had not had courage to make any effort in his own favour, modeſtly ſtood near him. Cecilia contrived to make room for Mr. Goſport next to herſelf, and Morrice was ſufficiently happy in being allowed to call the waiters, ſuperintend the proviſions, and ſerve the whole party.

The taſk of making tea fell upon Cecilia, who being ſomewhat incommoded by the vicinity of her neighbours, Mrs. Mears called out to Mr. Meadows "Do pray, Sir, be ſo good as to make room for one of us at your ſide."

Mr. Meadows, who was indolently picking his teeth, and examining them with a tooth pick caſe glaſs, did not, at firſt, ſeem to hear her; and when ſhe repeated her requeſt, he only looked at her, and ſaid "umph?"

"Now really, Mr. Meadows," ſaid ſhe, "when you ſee any ladies in ſuch diſtreſs, I wonder how you can forbear helping them."

"In diſtreſs, are you?" cried he, with a vacant ſmile, "pray what's the matter?"

"Don't you ſee? we are ſo crowded we can hardly ſit."

"Can't you?" cried he, "upon my honour it's very shameful that these people don't contrive some seats more convenient."

"Yes," said Mrs. Mears; "but if you would be so kind as to let somebody else sit by you we should not want any contrivance."

Here Mr. Meadows was seized with a furious fit of yawning, which as much diverted Cecilia and Mr. Gosport, as it offended Mrs. Mears, who with great displeasure added, "Indeed, Mr. Meadows, it's very strange that you never hear what's said to you."

"I beg your pardon," said he, "were you speaking to me?" and again began picking his teeth.

Morrice, eager to contrast his civility with the inattention of Mr. Meadows, now flew round to the other side of the table, and calling out "let *me* help you, Miss Beverley, I can make tea better than any body," he lent over that part of the form which Mr. Meadows had occupied with one of his feet, in order to pour it out himself: but Mr. Meadows, by an unfortunate removal of his foot, bringing him forwarder than he was prepared to go, the tea pot and its contents were overturned immediately opposite to Cecilia.

Young Delvile, who saw the impending evil, from an impetuous impulse to prevent her suffering by it, hastily drew her back,

and bending down before her, ſecured her preſervation by receiving himſelf the miſchief with which ſhe was threatened.

Mrs. Mears and Mrs. Harrel vacated their ſeats in a moment, and Mr. Goſport and Mr. Arnott aſſiſted in clearing the table, and removing Cecilia, who was very ſlightly hurt, and at once ſurpriſed, aſhamed and pleaſed at the manner in which ſhe had been ſaved.

Young Delvile, though a ſufferer from his gallantry, the hot water having penetrated through his coat to his arm and ſhoulder, was at firſt inſenſible to his ſituation, from an apprehenſion that Cecilia had not wholly eſcaped; and his enquiries were ſo eager and ſo anxious, made with a look of ſuch ſolicitude, and a voice of ſuch alarm, that, equally aſtoniſhed and gratified, ſhe ſecretly bleſt the accident which had given birth to his uneaſineſs, however ſhe grieved for its conſequence to himſelf.

But no ſooner was he ſatisfied of her ſafety, than he felt himſelf obliged to retire; yet attributing to inconvenience what was really the effect of pain, he hurried away with an appearance of ſport, ſaying, "There is ſomething, I muſt own, rather *unknightly* in quitting the field for a wet jacket, but the company, I hope, will only give me credit for flying away to Ranelagh. So

Like

" Like a brave general after being beat,
I'll exult and rejoice in a prudent retreat." *

He then haſtened to his carriage: and poor Morrice, frightened and confounded at the diſaſter he had occaſioned, ſneaked after him, with much leſs ceremony. While Mr. Meadows, wholly unconcerned by the diſtreſs and confuſion around him, ſat quietly picking his teeth, and looking on, during the whole tranſaction, with an unmeaning ſtare, that made it doubtful whether he had even perceived it.

Order being now ſoon reſtored, the ladies finiſhed their tea, and went up ſtairs. Cecilia, to whom the late accident had afforded much new and intereſting matter for reflection, wiſhed immediately to have returned home, but ſhe was not the leader of the party, and therefore could not make the propoſal.

They then ſtrolled through all the apartments, and having walked about till the faſhionable time of retiring, they were joined by Sir Robert Floyer, and proceeded to the little room near the entrance to the great one, in order to wait for their carriages.

Here Cecilia again met Miſs Larolles, who came to make various remarks, and infinite

* Smart.

infinite ridicule, upon ſundry unfaſhionable or uncoſtly articles in the dreſſes of the ſurrounding company; as well as to complain, with no little reſentment, that Mr. Meadows was again ſtanding before the fire!

Captain Areſby alſo advanced, to tell her he was quite *abattu* by having ſo long loſt ſight of her, to hope ſhe *would make a renounce* of mortifying the world by diſcarding it, and to proteſt he had waited for his carriage till he was actually upon the point of being *acablé*.

In the midſt of this *jargon*, to which the fulneſs of Cecilia's mind hardly permitted her to liſten, there ſuddenly appeared at the door of the apartment, Mr. Albany, who, with his uſual auſterity of countenance, ſtopt to look round upon the company.

"Do you ſee," cried Mr. Goſport to Cecilia, "who approaches? your poor *ſycophants* will again be taken to taſk, and I, for one, tremble at the coming ſtorm!".

"O Lord," cried Miſs Larolles, "I wiſh I was ſafe in my chair! that man always frightens me out of my ſenſes. You've no notion what diſagreeable things he ſays to one. I aſſure you I've no doubt but he's crazy; and I'm always in the ſhockingeſt fright in the world for fear he ſhould be taken with a fit while I'm near him."

"It

"It is really a petrifying thing," ſaid the Captain, "that one can go to no *ſpectacle* without the *horreur* of being *obſedé* by that perſon! if he comes this way, I ſhall certainly make a renounce, and retire."

"Why ſo?" ſaid Sir Robert, "what the d—l do you mind him for?"

"O he is the greateſt bore in nature!" cried the Captain, "and I always do *mon poſſible* to avoid him; for he breaks out into ſuch barbarous phraſes, that I find myſelf *degouté* with him in a moment."

"O, I aſſure you," ſaid Miſs Larolles, "he attacks one ſometimes in a manner you've no idea. One day he came up to me all of a ſudden, and aſked me what good I thought I did by dreſſing ſo much? Only conceive how ſhocking!"

"O, I have had the *horreur* of queſtions of that ſort from him *ſans fin*," ſaid the Captain; "once he took the liberty to aſk me, what ſervice I was of to the world! and another time, he deſired me to inform him whether I had ever made any poor perſon pray for me! and, in ſhort, he has ſo frequently inconvenienced me by his impertinences, that he really bores me to a degree."

"That's juſt the thing that makes him hunt you down," ſaid Sir Robert; "if he

were

were to ask me questions for a month together, I should never trouble myself to move a muscle."

"The matter of his discourse," said Mr. Gosport, "is not more singular than the manner, for without any seeming effort or consciousness, he runs into blank verse perpetually. I have made much enquiry about him, but all I am able to learn, is that he was certainly confined, at one part of his life, in a private mad-house: and though now, from not being mischievous, he is set at liberty, his looks, language, and whole behaviour, announce the former injury of his intellects."

"O Lord," cried Miss Larolles, half-screaming, "what shocking notions you put in one's head! I declare I dare say I sha'n't get safe home for him, for I assure you I believe he's taken a spite to me! and all because one day, before I knew of his odd ways, I happened to fall a laughing at his going about in that old coat. Do you know it put him quite in a passion! only conceive how ill-natured!"

"O he has distressed me," exclaimed the Captain, with a shrug, "*partout!* and found so much fault with every thing I have done, that I should really be glad to have the honour to cut, for the moment he comes up to me, I know what I have to expect!"

"But

"But I muſt tell you," cried Miſs Larolles, "how monſtrouſly he put me in a fright one evening when I was talking with Miſs Moffat. Do you know, he came up to us, and aſked what we were ſaying! and becauſe we could not think in a minute of ſomething to anſwer him, he ſaid he ſuppoſed we were only talking ſome ſcandal, and ſo we had better go home, and employ ourſelves in working for the poor! only think how horrid! and after that, he was ſo exceſſive impertinent in his remarks, there was quite no bearing him. I aſſure you he cut me up ſo you've no notion."

Here Mr. Albany advanced; and every body but Sir Robert moved out of the way.

Fixing his eyes upon Cecilia, with an expreſſion *more in ſorrow than in anger*, after contemplating her ſome time in ſilence, he exclaimed, "Ah lovely, but periſhable flower! how long will that ingenuous countenance, wearing, becauſe wanting no diſguiſe, look reſponſive of the whiteneſs of the region within? How long will that air of innocence irradiate your whole appearance? unſpoilt by proſperity, unperverted by power! pure in the midſt of ſurrounding depravity! unſullied in the tainted air of infectious perdition!"

The confuſion of Cecilia at this public addreſs,

addreſs, which drew upon her the eyes and attention of all the company, was inexpreſſible; ſhe aroſe from her ſeat, covered with bluſhes, and ſaying, "I fancy the carriage muſt be ready," preſſed forward to quit the room, followed by Sir Robert, who anſwered, "No, no, they'll call it when it comes up. Arnott, will you go and ſee where it is?"

Cecilia ſtopt, but whiſpered Mrs. Harrel to ſtand near her.

"And whither," cried Albany indignantly, "whither wouldſt thou go? Art thou already diſdainful of my precepts? and canſt thou not one ſhort moment ſpare from the tumultuous folly which encircles thee? Many and many are the hours thou mayſt ſpend with ſuch as theſe; the world, alas! is full of them; weary not then, ſo ſoon, of an old man that would admoniſh thee,—he cannot call upon thee long, for ſoon he will be called upon himſelf!"

This ſolemn exhortation extremely diſtreſſed her; and fearing to ſtill further offend him by making another effort to eſcape, ſhe anſwered in a low voice, "I will not only hear, but thank you for your precepts, if you will forbear to give them before ſo many witneſſes."

"Whence," cried he ſternly, "theſe vain and ſuperficial diſtinctions? Do you not

not dance in public? What renders you more conſpicuous? Do you not dreſs to be admired, and walk to be obſerved? Why then this fantaſtical ſcruple, unjuſtified by reaſon, unſupported by analogy? Is folly only to be publiſhed? Is vanity alone to be exhibited? Oh ſlaves of ſenſeleſs contradiction! Oh feeble followers of yet feebler prejudice! daring to be wicked, yet fearing to be wiſe; dauntleſs in levity, yet ſhrinking from the name of virtue!"

The latter part of this ſpeech, during which he turned with energy to the whole company, raiſed ſuch a general alarm, that all the ladies haſtily quitted the room, and all the gentlemen endeavoured to enter it, equally curious to ſee the man who made the oration, and the lady to whom it was addreſſed. Cecilia, therefore, found her ſituation unſupportable; "I muſt go," ſhe cried, "whether there is a carriage or not! pray, Mrs. Harrel, let us go!"

Sir Robert then offered to take her hand, which ſhe was extremely ready to give him; but while the crowd made their paſſage difficult, Albany, following and ſtopping her, ſaid, "What is it you fear? a miſerable old man, worn out by the ſorrows of that experience from which he offers you counſel? What, too, is it you truſt? a libertine wretch, coveting nothing but your wealth, for

for the gift of which he will repay you by the perverſion of your principles!"

"What the d—l do you mean by that?" cried the Baronet.

"To ſhew," anſwered he, auſterely, "the inconſiſtency of falſe delicacy; to ſhew how thoſe who are too timid for truth, can fearleſs meet licentiouſneſs."

"For Heaven's ſake, Sir," cried Cecilia, "ſay no more to me now! call upon me in Portman-ſquare when you pleaſe,—reprove me in whatever you think me blameable, I ſhall be grateful for your inſtructions, and bettered, perhaps, by your care;—but leſſons and notice thus public can do me nothing but injury."

"How happy," cried he, "were no other injury near thee! ſpotleſs were then the hour of thy danger, bright, fair and refulgent thy paſſage to ſecurity! the Good would receive thee with praiſe, the Guilty would ſupplicate thy prayers, the Poor would follow thee with bleſſings, and Children would be taught by thy example!"

He then quitted her, every body making way as he moved, and proceeded into the great room. Mrs. Harrel's carriage being alſo announced at the ſame time, Cecilia loſt not an inſtant in haſtening away.

Sir Robert, as he conducted her, diſdainfully laughed at the adventure, which

the

the general licence allowed to Mr. Albany prevented his reſenting, and which therefore he ſcorned to appear moved at.

Mrs. Harrel could talk of nothing elſe, neither was Cecilia diſpoſed to change the ſubject, for the remains of inſanity which ſeemed to hang upon him were affecting without being alarming, and her deſire to know more of him grew every inſtant ſtronger.

This deſire, however, outlived not the converſation to which it gave riſe; when ſhe returned to her own room, no veſtige of it remained upon her mind, which a nearer concern and deeper intereſt wholly occupied.

The behaviour of young Delvile had pained, pleaſed, and diſturbed her; his activity to ſave her from miſchief might proceed merely from gallantry or good nature; upon that, therefore, ſhe dwelt little: but his eagerneſs, his anxiety, his inſenſibility to himſelf, were more than good breeding could claim, and ſeemed to ſpring from a motive leſs artificial.

She now, therefore, believed that her partiality was returned; and this belief had power to ſhake all her reſolves, and enfeeble all her objections. The arrogance of Mr. Delvile leſſened in her reflections, the admonitions of Mr. Monckton abated in their influence. With the firſt ſhe conſidered

that

that though connected ſhe need not live, and for the ſecond, though ſhe acknowledged the excellence of his judgment, ſhe concluded him wholly ignorant of her ſentiments of Delvile; which ſhe imagined, when once revealed, would make every obſtacle to the alliance ſeem trifling, when put in competition with mutual eſteem and affection.

CHAP. VII.

A REPROOF.

THE attention of Cecilia to her own affairs, did not make her forgetful of thoſe of the Harrels: and the morning after the buſy day which was laſt recorded, as ſoon as ſhe quitted the breakfaſt-room, ſhe began a note to Mr. Monckton, but was interrupted with information that he was already in the houſe.

She went to him immediately, and had the ſatisfaction of finding him alone: but deſirous as ſhe was to relate to him the tranſactions of the preceding day, there was in his countenance a gravity ſo unuſual, that her impatience was involuntarily checked, and ſhe waited firſt to hear if he had himſelf any thing to communicate.

He kept her not long in ſuſpence; "Miſs Beverley," he ſaid, "I bring you intelligence which though I know you will be very ſorry to hear, it is abſolutely neceſſary ſhould be told you immediately: you may otherwiſe, from however laudable motives, be drawn into ſome action which you may repent for life."

"What

"What now!" cried Cecilia, much alarmed.

"All that I ſuſpected," ſaid he, "and more than I hinted to you, is true; Mr. Harrel is a ruined man! he is not worth a groat, and he is in debt beyond what he ever poſſeſſed."

Cecilia made no anſwer: ſhe knew but too fatally the deſperate ſtate of his affairs, yet that *his debts were more than he had ever poſſeſſed*, ſhe had not thought poſſible.

"My enquiries," continued he, "have been among principals, and ſuch as would not dare deceive me. I haſtened, therefore, to you, that this timely notice might enforce the injunctions I gave you when I had the pleaſure of ſeeing you laſt, and prevent a misjudging generoſity from leading you into any injury of your own fortune, for a man who is paſt all relief from it, and who cannot be ſaved, even though you were to be deſtroyed for his ſake."

"You are very good," ſaid Cecilia, "but your counſel is now too late!" She then briefly acquainted him with what paſſed, and with how large a ſum ſhe had parted.

He heard her with rage, amazement, and horror: and after inveighing againſt Mr. Harrel in the bittereſt terms, he ſaid, "But why, before you ſigned your name to ſo

baſe an impoſition, could you not ſend for me?"

"I wiſhed, I meant to have done it," cried ſhe, "but I thought the time paſt when you could help me: how, indeed, could you have ſaved me? my word was given, given with an oath the moſt ſolemn, and the firſt I have ever taken in my life."

"An oath ſo forced," anſwered he, "the moſt delicate conſcience would have abſolved you from performing. You have, indeed, been groſsly impoſed upon, and pardon me if I add unaccountably to blame. Was it not obvious that relief ſo circumſtanced muſt be temporary? If his ruin had been any thing leſs than certain, what tradeſmen would have been inſolent? You have therefore deprived yourſelf of the power of doing good to a worthier object, merely to grant a longer date to extravagance and villainy."

"Yet how," cried Cecilia, deeply touched by this reproof, "how could I do otherwiſe? Could I ſee a man in the agonies of deſpair, hear him firſt darkly hint his own deſtruction, and afterwards behold him almoſt in the very act of ſuicide, the inſtrument of ſelf-murder in his deſperate hand—and yet, though he put his life in my power, though he told me I could preſerve him, and told me he had no other reliance

reliance or resource, could I leave him to his dreadful despondence, refuse my assisting hand to raise him from perdition, and, to save what, after all, I am well able to spare, suffer a fellow-creature, who flung himself upon my mercy, to offer up his last accounts with an action blacker than any which had preceded it?—No, I cannot repent what I have done, though I lament, indeed, that the object was not more deserving."

"Your representation," said Mr. Monckton, "like every thing else that I ever heard you utter, breathes nothing but benevolence and goodness: but your pity has been abused, and your understanding imposed upon. Mr. Harrel had no intention to destroy himself; the whole was an infamous trick, which, had not your generosity been too well known, would never have been played."

"I cannot think quite so ill of him," said Cecilia, "nor for the world would I have risked my own future reproaches by trusting to such a suspicion, which, had it proved wrong, and had Mr. Harrel, upon my refusal, committed the fatal deed, would have made his murder upon my own conscience rest for ever! surely the experiment would have been too hazardous, when the consequence had all my future peace in its power."

"It is impoſſible not to revere your ſcruples," ſaid Mr. Monckton, "even while I conſider them as cauſeleſs; for cauſeleſs they undoubtedly were: the man who could act ſo atrocious a part, who could ſo ſcandalouſly pillage a young lady who was his gueſt and his ward, take advantage of her temper for the plunder of her fortune, and extort her compliance by the baſeſt and moſt diſhonourable arts, meant only to terrify her into compliance, for he can be nothing leſs than a downright and thorough ſcoundrel, capable of every ſpecies of mean villainy."

He then proteſted he would at leaſt acquaint her other guardians with what had paſſed, whoſe buſineſs it would be to enquire if there was any chance of redreſs.

Cecilia, however, had not much trouble in combating this propoſal; for though her objections, which were merely thoſe of punctilious honour and delicacy, weighed nothing with a man who regarded them as abſurdities, yet his own apprehenſions of appearing too officious in her affairs, forced him, after a little deliberation, to give up the deſign.

"Beſides," ſaid Cecilia, "as I have his bond for what I have parted with, I have, at leaſt, no right to complain, unleſs, after he receives his rents, he refuſes to pay me."

"His

"His bonds! his rents!" exclaimed Mr. Monckton, "what is a man's bond who is not worth a guinea? and what are his rents, when all he ever owned muſt be ſold before they are due, and when he will not himſelf receive a penny from the ſale, as he has neither land, houſe, nor poſſeſſion of any ſort that is not mortgaged?"

"Nay, then," ſaid Cecilia, "if ſo, it is indeed all over! I am ſorry, I am grieved! —but it is paſt, and nothing, therefore, remains, but that I try to forget I ever was richer!"

"This is very youthful philoſophy," ſaid Mr. Monckton; "but it will not leſſen your regret hereafter, when the value of money is better known to you."

"If I ſhall dearly buy my experience," ſaid Cecilia, "let me be the more attentive to making good uſe of it; and, ſince my loſs ſeems irremediable to myſelf, let me at leaſt endeavour to ſecure its utility to Mr. Harrel."

She then told him her wiſh to propoſe to that gentleman ſome ſcheme of reformation, while yeſterday's events were yet recent in his mind: but Mr. Monckton, who had hardly patience to hear her, exclaimed, "He is a wretch, and deſerves the full force of the diſgrace he is courting. What is now moſt neceſſary is to guard you from

his further machinations, for you may elſe be involved in ruin as deep as his own. He now knows the way to frighten you, and he will not fail to put it in practice."

"No, Sir," anſwered Cecilia, "he would vainly apply to me in future: I cannot repent that I ventured not yeſterday to brave his menaces, but too little is the comfort I feel from what I have beſtowed, to ſuffer any conſideration to make me part with more."

"Your reſolution," anſwered he, "will be as feeble as your generoſity will be potent: depend nothing upon yourſelf, but inſtantly quit his houſe. You will elſe be made reſponſible for every debt that he contracts; and whatever may be his difficulties hereafter, he will know that to extricate himſelf from them, he has but to talk of dying, and to ſhew you a ſword or a piſtol."

"If ſo, then," ſaid Cecilia, looking down while ſhe ſpoke, "I ſuppoſe I muſt again go to Mr. Delvile's."

This was by no means the purpoſe of Mr. Monckton, who ſaw not more danger to her fortune with one of her guardians, than to her perſon with the other. He ventured, therefore, to recommend to her a reſidence with Mr. Briggs, well knowing that his houſe would be a ſecurity againſt her ſeeing any man equal to himſelf, and hoping

hoping that under his roof he might again be as unrivalled in her opinion and eſteem, as he formerly was in the country.

But here the oppoſition of Cecilia was too earneſt for any hope that it might be ſurmounted; for, added to her diſlike of Mr. Briggs, her repugnance to ſuch an habitation was ſtrongly, though ſilently encreaſed, by her ſecret inclination to return to St. James's-ſquare.

"I mention not Mr. Briggs as an eligible hoſt," ſaid Mr. Monckton, after liſtening to her objections, "but merely as one more proper for you than Mr. Delvile, with whom your fixing at preſent would be but ill thought of in the world."

"Ill thought of, Sir? Why ſo?"

"Becauſe he has a ſon; for whoſe ſake alone it would be univerſally concluded you changed your abode: and to give any pretence for ſuch a report, would by no means accord with the uſual delicacy of your conduct."

Cecilia was confounded by this ſpeech: the truth of the charge ſhe felt, and the probability of the cenſure ſhe did not dare diſpute.

He then gave her a thouſand exhortations to beware of the ſchemes and artifices of Mr. Harrel, which he foreſaw would be innumerable. He told her, too, that with

reſpect to Sir Robert Floyer, he thought ſhe had better ſuffer the report to ſubſide of itſelf, which in time it muſt neceſſarily do, than give to it ſo much conſequence as to ſend a meſſage to the Baronet, from which he might pretend to infer that hitherto ſhe had been wavering, or ſhe would have ſent to him ſooner.

But the real motive of this advice was, that as he found Sir Robert by no means to be dreaded, he hoped the report, if generally circulated and credited, might keep off other pretenders, and intimidate or deceive young Delvile.

The purport for which Cecilia had wiſhed this conference was, however, wholly unanſwered; Mr. Monckton, enraged by the conduct of Mr. Harrel, refuſed to talk of his affairs, and could only mention him with deteſtation: but Cecilia, leſs ſevere in her judgment, and more tender in her heart, would not yet give up the hope of an amendment ſhe ſo anxiouſly wiſhed; and having now no other perſon to whom ſhe could apply, determined to conſult with Mr. Arnott, whoſe affection for his ſiſter would give him a zeal in the affair that might ſomewhat ſupply the place of ſuperior abilities.

There was, indeed, no time to be loſt in making the projected attempt, for no ſooner

was

was the immediate danger of ſuffering removed, than the alarm wore away, and the penitence was forgotten; every thing went on as uſual, no new regulations were made, no expences abated, no pleaſures forborn, not a thought of hereafter admitted: and ruinous and terrible as had been the preceding ſtorm, no trace of it was viſible in the ſerenity of the preſent calm.

An occaſion of diſcuſſion with Mr. Arnott very ſpeedily offered. Mr. Harrel ſaid he had obſerved in the looks of his friends at the Pantheon much ſurpriſe at the ſight of him, and declared he ſhould take yet another meaſure for removing all ſuſpicion. This was to give a ſplendid entertainment at his own houſe to all his acquaintance, to which he meant to invite every body of any conſequence he had ever ſeen, and almoſt every body he had ever heard of, in his life.

Levity ſo unfeeling, and a ſpirit of extravagance ſo irreclaimable, were hopeleſs prognoſtics; yet Cecilia would not deſiſt from her deſign. She therefore took the earlieſt opportunity of ſpeaking with Mr. Arnott upon the ſubject, when ſhe openly expreſſed her uneaſineſs at the ſtate of his brother's affairs, and warmly acknowledged her diſpleaſure at his diſſipated way of life.

Mr. Arnott ſoon ſhewed that example was all he wanted to declare the ſame ſentiments. He owned he had long diſapproved the conduct of Mr. Harrel, and trembled at the ſituation of his ſiſter. They then conſidered what it was poſſible to propoſe that might retrieve their affairs, and concluded that entirely to quit London for ſome years, was the only chance that remained of ſaving them from abſolute deſtruction.

Mr. Arnott, therefore, though fearfully, and averſe to the taſk, told his ſiſter their mutual advice. She thanked him, ſaid ſhe was much obliged to him, and would certainly conſider his propoſal, and mention it to Mr. Harrel.—Parties of pleaſure, however, intervened, and the promiſe was neglected.

Cecilia then again ſpoke herſelf. Mrs. Harrel, much ſoftened by her late acts of kindneſs, was no longer offended by her interference, but contented herſelf with confeſſing that ſhe quite hated the country, and could only bear to live in it in ſummer time. And when Cecilia very earneſtly expoſtulated on the weakneſs of ſuch an objection to a ſtep abſolutely neceſſary for her future ſafety and happineſs, ſhe ſaid, *ſhe could do no worſe than that if already ruined*, and

and therefore that she thought *it would be very hard to expect from her such a sacrifice before-hand.*

It was in vain Cecilia remonstrated: Mrs. Harrel's love of pleasure was stronger than her understanding, and therefore, though she listened to her with patience, she concluded with the same answer she had begun.

Cecilia then, though almost heartless, resolved upon talking with Mr. Harrel himself: and therefore, taking an opportunity which he had not time to elude, she ingenuously told him her opinion of his danger, and of the manner in which it might be avoided.

He paid unusual attention to her advice, but said she was much mistaken with respect to his affairs, which he believed he should now very speedily retrieve, as he had had the preceding night an uncommon *run of luck*, and flattered himself with being able very shortly to pay all his debts, and begin the world again upon a new score.

This open confession of gaming was but a new shock to Cecilia, who scrupled not to represent to him the uncertainty of so hazardous a reliance, and the inevitable evils of so destructive a practice.

She made not, however, the least impression upon his mind; he assured her he doubted

doubted not giving her ſhortly a good account of himſelf, and that living in the country was a reſource of deſperation which need not be anticipated.

Cecilia, though grieved and provoked by their mutual folly and blindneſs, could proceed no further: advice and admonition ſhe ſpared not, but authority ſhe had none to uſe. She regretted her ineffectual attempt to Mr. Arnott, who was yet more cruelly afflicted at it; but though they converſed upon the ſubject by every opportunity, they were equally unable to relate any ſucceſs from their efforts, or to deviſe any plan more likely to enſure it.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

A MISTAKE.

MEAN time young Delvile failed not to honour Cecilia's introduction of him to Mr. Harrel, by waiting upon that gentleman as ſoon as the ill effects of his accident at the Pantheon permitted him to leave his own houſe. Mr. Harrel, though juſt going out when he called, was deſirous of being upon good terms with his family, and therefore took him up ſtairs to preſent him to his lady, and invited him to tea and cards the next evening.

Cecilia, who was with Mrs. Harrel, did not ſee him without emotion; which was not much leſſened by the taſk of thanking him for his aſſiſtance at the Pantheon, and enquiring how he had himſelf fared. No ſign, however, of emotion appeared in return, either when he firſt addreſſed, or afterwards anſwered her: the look of ſolicitude with which ſhe had been ſo much ſtruck when they laſt parted was no longer diſcernable, and the voice of ſenſibility which had removed all her doubts, was no longer to be heard. His general eaſe, and natural

natural gaiety were again unruffled, and though he had never seemed really indifferent to her, there was not the least appearance of any added partiality.

Cecilia felt an involuntary mortification as she observed this change: yet, upon reflection, she still attributed his whole behaviour to his mistake with respect to her situation, and therefore was but the more gratified by the preference he occasionally betrayed.

The invitation for the next evening was accepted, and Cecilia, for once, felt no repugnance to joining the company. Young Delvile again was in excellent spirits; but though his chief pleasure was evidently derived from conversing with her, she had the vexation to observe that he seemed to think her the undoubted property of the Baronet, always retreating when he approached, and as careful, when next her, to yield his place if he advanced, as, when he was distant, to guard it from all others.

But when Sir Robert was employed at cards, all scruples ceasing, he neglected not to engross her almost wholly. He was eager to speak to her of the affairs of Mr. Belfield, which he told her wore now a better aspect. The letter, indeed, of recommendation which he had shewn to her, had failed, as the nobleman to whom it was written had al-

ready entered into an engagement for his ſon; but he had made application elſewhere which he believed would be ſucceſsful, and he had communicated his proceedings to Mr. Belfield, whoſe ſpirits he hoped would recover by this proſpect of employment and advantage. "It is, however, but too true," he added, "that I have rather obtained his conſent to the ſteps I am taking, than his approbation of them: nor do I believe, had I previouſly conſulted him, I ſhould have had even that. Diſappointed in his higher views, his ſpirit is broken, and he is heartleſs and hopeleſs, ſcarce condeſcending to accept relief, from the bitter remembrance that he expected preferment. Time, however, will blunt this acute ſenſibility, and reflection will make him bluſh at this unreaſonable delicacy. But we muſt patiently ſooth him till he is more himſelf, or while we mean to ſerve, we ſhall only torment him. Sickneſs, ſorrow, and poverty have all fallen heavily upon him, and they have all fallen at once: we muſt not, therefore, wonder to find him intractable, when his mind is as much depreſſed, as his body is enervated."

Cecilia, to whom his candour and generoſity always gave freſh delight, ſtrengthened his opinions by her concurrence, and confirmed his deſigns by the intereſt which ſhe took in them.

From

From this time, he found almoſt daily ſome occaſion for calling in Portman-Square. The application of Cecilia in favour of Mr. Belfield gave him a right to communicate to her all his proceedings concerning him; and he had ſome letter to ſhew, ſome new ſcheme to propoſe, ſome refuſal to lament, or ſome hope to rejoice over, almoſt perpetually: or even when theſe failed, Cecilia had a cold, which he came to enquire after, or Mrs. Harrel gave him an invitation, which rendered any excuſe unneceſſary. But though his intimacy with Cecilia was encreaſed, though his admiration of her was conſpicuous, and his fondneſs for her ſociety ſeemed to grow with the enjoyment of it, he yet never manifeſted any doubt of her engagement with the Baronet, nor betrayed either intention or deſire to ſupplant him. Cecilia, however, repined not much at the miſtake, ſince ſhe thought it might be inſtrumental to procuring her a more impartial acquaintance with his character, than ſhe could rationally expect, if, as ſhe hoped, the explanation of his error ſhould make him ſeek her good opinion with more ſtudy and deſign.

To ſatisfy herſelf not only concerning the brother but the ſiſter, ſhe again viſited Miſs Belfield, and had the pleaſure of finding her in better ſpirits, and hearing that the

noble

noble friend of her brother, whom she had already mentioned, and whom Cecilia had before suspected to be young Delvile, had now pointed out to him a method of conduct by which his affairs might be decently retrieved, and himself creditably employed. Miss Belfield spoke of the plan with the highest satisfaction; yet she acknowledged that her mother was extremely discontented with it, and that her brother himself was rather led by shame than inclination to its adoption. Yet he was evidently easier in his mind, though far from happy, and already so much better, that Mr. Rupil said he would very soon be able to leave his room.

Such was the quiet and contented situation of Cecilia, when one evening, which was destined for company at home, while she was alone in the drawing-room, which Mrs. Harrel had just left to answer a note, Sir Robert Floyer accidentally came up stairs before the other gentlemen.

"Ha!" cried he, the moment he saw her, "at last have I the good fortune to meet with you alone! this, indeed, is a favour I thought I was always to be denied."

He was then approaching her; but Cecilia, who shrunk involuntary at the sight of him, was retreating hastily to quit the room, when suddenly recollecting that no better opop-

opportunity might ever offer for a final explanation with him, ſhe irreſolutely ſtopt; and Sir Robert, immediately following, took her hand, and preſſing it to his lips as ſhe endeavoured to withdraw it, exclaimed "You are a moſt charming creature!" when the door was opened, and young Delvile at the ſame moment was announced and appeared.

Cecilia, colouring violently, and extremely chagrined, haſtily diſengaged herſelf from his hold. Delvile ſeemed uncertain whether he ought not to retire, which Sir Robert perceiving, bowed to him with an air of mingled triumph and vexation, and ſaid "Sir your moſt obedient!"

The doubt, however, in which every one appeared of what was next to be done, was immediately removed by the return of Mrs. Harrel, and the arrival at almoſt the ſame moment of more company.

The reſt of the evening was ſpent, on the part of Cecilia, moſt painfully: the explanation ſhe had planned had ended in worſe than nothing, for by ſuffering the Baronet to detain her, ſhe had rather ſhewn a diſpoſition to oblige, than any intention to diſcard him; and the ſituation in which ſhe had been ſurpriſed by young Delvile, was the laſt to clear the ſuſpicions ſhe ſo little wiſhed him to harbour: while, on his part, the

the accident ſeemed to occaſion no other alteration than that of rendering him more than uſually aſſiduous to give way to Sir Robert whenever he approached her.

Nor was Sir Robert ſlack in taking advantage of this attention: he was highly in ſpirits, talked to her with more than common freedom, and wore the whole evening an air of exulting ſatisfaction.

Cecilia, provoked by this preſumption, hurt by the behaviour of young Delvile, and mortified by the whole affair, determined to leave this miſtake no longer in the power of accident, but to apply immediately to Mr. Delvile ſenior, and deſire him, as her guardian, to wait upon Sir Robert himſelf, and acquaint him that his perſeverance in purſuing her was both uſeleſs and offenſive: and by this method ſhe hoped at once to diſentangle herſelf for ever from the Baronet, and to diſcover more fully the ſentiments of young Delvile: for the provocation ſhe had juſt endured, robbed her of all patience for waiting the advice of Mr. Monckton.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

An Explanation.

THE following morning, therefore, Cecilia went early to St. James's Square: and, after the uſual ceremonies of meſſages and long waiting, ſhe was ſhewn into an apartment where ſhe found Mr. Delvile and his ſon.

She rejoiced to ſee them together, and determined to make known to them both the purport of her viſit: and therefore, after ſome apologies and a little heſitation, ſhe told Mr. Delvile, that encouraged by his offers of ſerving her, ſhe had taken the liberty to call upon him with a view to entreat his aſſiſtance.

Young Delvile, immediately ariſing, would have quitted the room; but Cecilia, aſſuring him ſhe rather deſired what ſhe had to ſay ſhould be known than kept ſecret, begged that he would not diſturb himſelf.

Delvile, pleaſed with this permiſſion to hear her, and curious to know what would follow, very readily returned to his ſeat.

"I ſhould by no means," ſhe continued, "have

"have thought of proclaiming even to the moſt intimate of my friends, the partiality which Sir Robert Floyer has been pleaſed to ſhew me, had he left to me the choice of publiſhing or concealing it: but, on the contrary, his own behaviour ſeems intended not merely to diſplay it, but to inſinuate that it meets with my approbation. Mr. Harrel, alſo, urged by too much warmth of friendſhip, has encouraged this belief; nor, indeed, do I know at preſent where the miſtake ſtops, nor what it is report has not ſcrupled to affirm. But I think I ought no longer to neglect it, and therefore I have preſumed to ſolicit your advice in what manner I may moſt effectually contradict it."

The extreme ſurpriſe of young Delvile at this ſpeech was not more evident than pleaſant to Cecilia, to whom it accounted for all that had perplext her in his conduct, while it animated every expectation ſhe wiſhed to encourage.

"The behaviour of Mr. Harrel," anſwered Mr. Delvile, "has by no means been ſuch as to lead me to forget that his father was the ſon of a ſteward of Mr. Grant, who lived in the neighbourhood of my friend and relation the Duke of Derwent: nor can I ſufficiently congratulate myſelf that I have always declined acting with him. The late Dean,

Dean, indeed, never committed ſo ſtrange an impropriety as that of nominating Mr. Harrel and Mr. Briggs coadjutors with Mr. Delvile. The impropriety, however, though extremely offenſive to me, has never obliterated from my mind the eſteem I bore the Dean: nor can I poſſibly give a greater proof of it than the readineſs I have always ſhewn to offer my counſel and inſtruction to his neice. Mr. Harrel, therefore, ought certainly to have deſired Sir Robert Floyer to acquaint me with his propoſals before he gave to him any anſwer."

"Undoubtedly, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, willing to ſhorten this parading harangue, "but as he neglected that intention, will you think me too impertinent ſhould I entreat the favour of you to ſpeak with Sir Robert yourſelf, and explain to him the total inefficacy of his purſuit, ſince my determination againſt him is unalterable?"

Here the conference was interrupted by the entrance of a ſervant who ſaid ſomething to Mr. Delvile, which occaſioned his apologizing to Cecilia for leaving her for a few moments, and oſtentatiouſly aſſuring her that no buſineſs, however important, ſhould prevent his thinking of her affairs, or detain him from returning to her as ſoon as poſſible.

The aſtoniſhment of young Delvile at the ſtrength

ſtrength of her laſt expreſſion kept him ſilent ſome time after his father left the room; and then, with a countenance that ſtill marked his amazement, he ſaid "Is it poſſible, Miſs Beverley, that I ſhould twice have been thus egregiouſly deceived? or rather, that the whole town, and even the moſt intimate of your friends, ſhould ſo unaccountably have perſiſted in a miſtake."

"For the town," anſwered Cecilia, "I know not how it can have had any concern in ſo ſmall a matter; but for my intimate friends, I have too few to make it probable they ſhould ever have been ſo ſtrangely miſinformed."

"Pardon me," cried he, "it was from one who ought to know, that I had myſelf the intelligence."

"I intreat you, then," ſaid Cecilia, "to acquaint me who it was?"

"Mr. Harrel himſelf; who communicated it to a lady in my hearing, and at a public place."

Cecilia caſt up her eyes in wonder and indignation at a proof ſo incontrovertible of his falſehood, but made not any anſwer.

"Even yet," continued he, "I can ſcarcely feel undeceived; your engagement ſeemed ſo poſitive, your connexion ſo irretrievable,—ſo,—ſo *fixed*, I mean,—" He heſitated, a little embarraſſed; but then

ſuddenly exclaimed, "Yet whence, if to *neither* favourable, if indifferent alike to Sir Robert and to Belfield, whence that animated apprehenſion for their ſafety at the Opera-houſe? whence that never to be forgotten *oh ſtop him! good God! will nobody ſtop him!* — Words of anxiety ſo tender! and ſounds that ſtill vibrate in my ear!"

Cecilia, ſtruck with amazement in her turn at the ſtrength of his own expreſſions, bluſhed, and for a few minutes heſitated how to anſwer him: but then, to leave nothing that related to ſo diſagreeable a report in any doubt, ſhe reſolved to tell him ingenuouſly the circumſtances that had occaſioned her alarm: and therefore, though with ſome pain to her modeſty, ſhe confeſſed her fears that ſhe had herſelf provoked the affront, though her only view had been to diſcountenance Sir Robert, without meaning to ſhew any diſtinction to Mr. Belfield.

Delvile, who ſeemed charmed with the candour of this explanation, ſaid, when ſhe had finiſhed it, "You are then at liberty? ——Ah madam!—how many may rue ſo dangerous a diſcovery!"

"Could you think," ſaid Cecilia, endeavouring to ſpeak with her uſual eaſe, "that Sir Robert Floyer would be found ſo irreſiſtible?"

"Oh

"Oh no!" cried he, "far otherwiſe; a thouſand times I have wondered at his happineſs; a thouſand times, when I have looked at you, and liſtened to you, I have thought it impoſſible!—yet my authority ſeemed indiſputable. And how was I to diſcredit what was not uttered as a conjecture, but aſſerted as a fact? aſſerted, too, by the guardian with whom you lived? and not hinted as a ſecret, but affirmed as a point ſettled?"

"Yet ſurely," ſaid Cecilia, "you have heard me make uſe of expreſſions that could not but lead you to ſuppoſe there was ſome miſtake, whatever might be the authority which had won your belief."

"No," anſwered he, "I never ſuppoſed any miſtake, though ſometimes I thought you repented your engagement. I concluded, indeed, you had been unwarily drawn in, and I have even, at times, been tempted to acknowledge my ſuſpicions to you, ſtate your independence, and exhort you——as a *friend*, exhort you—to uſe it with ſpirit, and, if you were ſhackled unwillingly, incautiouſly, or unworthily, to break the chains by which you were confined, and reſtore to yourſelf that freedom of choice upon the uſe of which all your happineſs muſt ultimately depend. But I doubted if this were honourable to the Baronet,—

ronet,—and what, indeed, was my right to ſuch a liberty? none that every man might not be proud of, a wiſh to do honour to myſelf, under the officious pretence of ſerving the moſt amiable of women."

"Mr. Harrel," ſaid Cecilia, "has been ſo ſtrangely biggotted to his friend, that in his eagerneſs to manifeſt his regard for him, he ſeems to have forgotten every other conſideration; he would not, elſe, have ſpread ſo widely a report that could ſo ill ſtand enquiry.

"If Sir Robert," returned he, "is himſelf deceived while he deceives others, who can forbear to pity him? for my own part, inſtead of repining that hitherto I have been miſtaken, ought I not rather to bleſs an error that may have been my preſervative from danger?"

Cecilia, diſtreſſed in what manner to ſupport her part in the converſation, began now to wiſh the return of Mr. Delvile; and, not knowing what elſe to ſay, ſhe expreſſed her ſurpriſe at his long abſence.

"It is not, indeed, well timed," ſaid young Delvile, "juſt now,—at the moment when—" he ſtopt, and preſently exclaiming "Oh dangerous interval!" he aroſe from his ſeat in manifeſt diſorder.

Cecilia aroſe too, and haſtily ringing the bell, ſaid "Mr. Delvile I am ſure, is detained,

tained, and therefore I will order my chair, and call another time."

"Do I frighten you away?" ſaid he, aſſuming an appearance more placid.

"No," anſwered ſhe, "but I would not haſten Mr. Delvile."

A ſervant then came, and ſaid the chair was ready.

She would immediately have followed him, but young Delvile again ſpeaking, ſhe ſtopt a moment to hear him. "I fear," ſaid he, with much heſitation, "I have ſtrangely expoſed myſelf —— and that you cannot — but the extreme aſtoniſhment—" he ſtopt again, in the utmoſt confuſion, and then adding "you will permit me to attend you to the chair," he handed her down ſtairs, and in quitting her, bowed without ſaying a word more.

Cecilia, who was almoſt wholly indifferent to every part of the explanation but that which had actually paſſed, was now in a ſtate of felicity more delightful than any ſhe had ever experienced. She had not a doubt remaining of her influence over the mind of young Delvile, and the ſurpriſe which had made him rather betray than expreſs his regard, was infinitely more flattering and ſatisfactory to her than any formal or direct declaration. She had now convinced him ſhe was diſengaged, and in return, though

without ſeeming to intend it, he had convinced her of the deep intereſt which he took in the diſcovery. His perturbation, the words which eſcaped him, and his evident ſtruggle to ſay no more, were proofs juſt ſuch as ſhe wiſhed to receive of his partial admiration, ſince while they ſatisfied her heart, they alſo ſoothed her pride, by ſhewing a diffidence of ſucceſs which aſſured her that her own ſecret was ſtill ſacred, and that no weakneſs or inadvertency on her part had robbed her of the power of mingling dignity with the frankneſs with which ſhe meant to receive his addreſſes. All, therefore, that now employed her care, was to keep off any indiſſoluble engagement till each ſhould be better known to the other.

For this reſerve, however, ſhe had leſs immediate occaſion than ſhe expected; ſhe ſaw no more of young Delvile that day; neither did he appear the next. The third ſhe fully expected him,—but ſtill he came not. And while ſhe wondered at an abſence ſo uncommon, ſhe received a note from Lord Ernolf, to beg permiſſion to wait upon her for two minutes, at any time ſhe would appoint.

She readily ſent word that ſhe ſhould be at home for the reſt of the day, as ſhe wiſhed much for an opportunity of immediately finiſhing every affair but one, and ſetting her

her mind at liberty to think only of that which ſhe deſired ſhould proſper.

Lord Ernolf was with her in half an hour. She found him ſenſible and well bred, extremely deſirous to promote her alliance with his ſon, and apparently as much pleaſed with herſelf as with her fortune. He acquainted her that he had addreſſed himſelf to Mr. Harrel long ſince, but had been informed that ſhe was actually engaged to Sir Robert Floyer: he ſhould, therefore, have forborn taking up any part of her time, had he not, the preceding day, while on a viſit at Mr. Delvile's, been aſſured that Mr. Harrel was miſtaken, and that ſhe had not yet declared for any body. He hoped, therefore, that ſhe would allow his ſon the honour of waiting upon her, and permit him to talk with Mr. Briggs, who he underſtood was her acting guardian, upon ſuch matters as ought to be ſpeedily adjuſted.

Cecilia thanked him for the honour he intended her, and confirmed the truth of the account he had heard in St. James's-ſquare, but at the ſame time told him ſhe muſt decline receiving any viſits from his lordſhip's ſon, and intreated him to take no meaſure towards the promotion of an affair which never could ſucceed.

He ſeemed much concerned at her anſwer, and endeavoured for ſome time to

ſoften her, but found her ſo ſteady, though civil in her refuſal, that he was obliged, however unwillingly, to give up his attempt.

Cecilia, when he was gone, reflected with much vexation on the readineſs of the Delvile's to encourage his viſit; ſhe conſidered, however, that the intelligence he had heard might poſſibly be gathered in general converſation; but ſhe blamed herſelf that ſhe had not led to ſome enquiry what part of the family he had ſeen, and who was preſent when the information was given him.

Mean while ſhe found that neither coldneſs, diſtance, nor averſion were ſufficient to repreſs Sir Robert Floyer, who continued to perſecute her with as much confidence of ſucceſs as could have ariſen from the utmoſt encouragement. She again, though with much difficulty, contrived to ſpeak with Mr. Harrel upon the ſubject, and openly accuſed him of ſpreading a report abroad, as well as countenancing an expectation at home, that had neither truth nor juſtice to ſupport them.

Mr. Harrel, with his uſual levity and careleſſneſs, laughed at the charge, but denied any belief in her diſpleaſure, and affected to think ſhe was merely playing the coquet, while Sir Robert was not the leſs her decided choice.

Provoked

Provoked and wearied, Cecilia resolved no longer to depend upon any body but herself for the management of her own affairs, and therefore, to conclude the business without any possibility of further cavilling, she wrote the following note to Sir Robert herself.

To Sir Robert Floyer, Bart.

Miss Beverley presents her compliments to Sir Robert Floyer, and as she has some reason to fear Mr. Harrel did not explicitly acquaint him with her answer to the commission with which he was entrusted, she thinks it necessary, in order to obviate any possible misunderstanding, to take this method of returning him thanks for the honour of his good opinion, but of begging at the same time that he would not lose a moment upon her account, as her thanks are all she can now, or ever, offer in return.

Portman-square,
May 11th, 1779.

To this note Cecilia received no answer: but she had the pleasure to observe that Sir Robert forbore his usual visit on the day she sent it, and, though he appeared again the day following, he never spoke to her, and seemed sullen and out of humour.

Yet ſtill young Delvile came not, and ſtill, as her ſurpriſe encreaſed, her tranquility was diminiſhed. She could form no excuſe for his delay, nor conjecture any reaſon for his abſence. Every motive ſeemed to favour his ſeeking, and not one his ſhunning her: the explanation which had ſo lately paſſed had informed him he had no rival to fear, and the manner in which he had heard it aſſured her the information was not indifferent to him; why, then, ſo aſſiduous in his viſits when he thought her engaged, and ſo ſlack in all attendance when he knew ſhe was at liberty?

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

A MURMURING.

UNABLE to relieve herſelf from this perplexity, Cecilia, to divert her chagrin, again viſited Miſs Belfield. She had then the pleaſure to hear that her brother was much recovered, and had been able, the preceding day, to take an airing, which he had borne ſo well that Mr. Rupil had charged him to uſe the ſame exerciſe every morning.

"And will he?" ſaid Cecilia.

"No, madam, I am ſadly afraid not," ſhe anſwered, "for coach hire is very expenſive, and we are willing, now, to ſave all we can in order to help fitting him out for going abroad."

Cecilia then earneſtly entreated her to accept ſome aſſiſtance; but ſhe aſſured her ſhe did not dare without the conſent of her mother, which, however, ſhe undertook to obtain.

The next day, when Cecilia called to hear her ſucceſs, Mrs. Belfield, who hitherto had kept out of ſight, made her appearance.

She found her, alike in perſon, manners and converſation, a courſe and ordinary woman, not more unlike her ſon in talents and acquired accompliſhments, than diſſimilar to her daughter in ſoftneſs and natural delicacy.

The moment Cecilia was ſeated, ſhe began, without waiting for any ceremony, or requiring any ſolicitation, abruptly to talk of her affairs, and repiningly to relate her misfortunes.

"I find, madam," ſhe ſaid, "you have been ſo kind as to viſit my daughter Henny a great many times, but as I have no time for company, I have always kept out of the way, having other things to do than ſit ſtill to talk. I have had a ſad time of it here, ma'am, with my poor ſon's illneſs, having no conveniencies about me, and much ado to make him mind me; for he's all for having his own way, poor dear ſoul, and I'm ſure I don't know who could contradict him, for it's what I never had the heart to do. But then, ma'am, what is to come of it? You ſee how bad things go! for though I have got a very good income, it won't do for every thing. And if it was as much again, I ſhould want to ſave it all now. For here my poor ſon, you ſee, is reduced all in a minute, as one may ſay, from being one of the firſt gentlemen in the town,

to

to a mere poor object, without a farthing in the world!"

"He is, however, I hope now much better in his health?" said Cecilia.

"Yes, madam, thank heaven, for if he was worse, those might tell of it that would, for I'm sure I should never live to hear of it. He has been the best son in the world, madam, and used nothing but the best company, for I spared neither pains nor cost to bring him up genteely, and I believe there's not a nobleman in the land that looks more the gentleman. However, there's come no good of it, for though his acquaintances was all among the first quality, he never received the value of a penny from the best of them. So I have no great need to be proud. But I meant for the best, though I have often enough wished I had not meddled in the matter, but left him to be brought up in the shop, as his father was before him."

"His present plan, however," said Cecilia, "will I hope make you ample amends both for your sufferings and your tenderness."

"What, madam, when he's going to leave me, and settle in foreign parts? If you was a mother yourself, madam, you would not think that such good amends."

"Settle?" said Cecilia, "No, he only goes for a year or two."

"That's more than I can say, madam, or

or any body elſe; and nobody knows what may happen in that time. And how I ſhall keep myſelf up when he's beyond ſeas, I am ſure I don't know, for he has always been the pride of my life, and every penny I ſaved for him, I thought to have been paid in pounds."

"You will ſtill have your daughter, and ſhe ſeems ſo amiable, that I am ſure you can want no conſolation ſhe will not endeavour to give you."

"But what is a daughter, madam, to ſuch a ſon as mine? a ſon that I thought to have ſeen living like a prince, and ſending his own coach for me to dine with him! And now he's going to be taken away from me, and nobody knows if I ſhall live till he comes back. But I may thank myſelf, for if I had but been content to ſee him brought up in the ſhop—— yet all the world would have cried ſhame upon it, for when he was quite a child in arms, the people uſed all to ſay he was born to be a gentleman, and would live to make many a fine lady's heart ache."

"If he can but make *your* heart eaſy," ſaid Cecilia, ſmiling, "we will not grieve that the fine ladies ſhould eſcape the prophecy."

"O, ma'am, I don't mean by that to ſay he has been over gay among the ladies, for it's a thing I never heard of him; and I dare

ſay

ſay if any lady was to take a fancy to him, ſhe'd find there was not a modeſter young man in the world. But you muſt needs think what a hardſhip it is to me to have him turn out ſo unlucky, after all I have done for him, when I thought to have ſeen him at the top of the tree, as one may ſay!"

"He will yet, I hope," ſaid Cecilia, "make you rejoice in all your kindneſs to him: his health is already returning, and his affairs wear again a more proſperous aſpect."

"But do you ſuppoſe, ma'am, that having him ſent two or three hundred miles away from me, with ſome young maſter to take care of, is the way to make up to me what I have gone through for him? why I uſed to deny myſelf every thing in the world, in order to ſave money to buy him ſmart cloaths, and let him go to the Opera, and Ranelagh, and ſuch ſort of places, that he might keep himſelf in fortune's way! and now you ſee the end of it! here he is, in a little ſhabby room up two pair of ſtairs, with not one of the great folks coming near him, to ſee if he's ſo much as dead or alive."

"I do not wonder," ſaid Cecilia, "that you reſent their ſhewing ſo little gratitude for the pleaſure and entertainment they have formerly received from him: but com-

fort

fort yourſelf that it will at leaſt ſecure you from any ſimilar diſappointment, as Mr. Belfield will, in future, be guarded from forming ſuch precarious expectations."

"But what good will that do me, ma'am, for all the money he has been throwing after them all this while? do you think I would have ſcraped it up for him, and gone without every thing in the world, to ſee it all end in this manner? why he might as well have been brought up the commoneſt journeyman, for any comfort I ſhall have of him at this rate. And ſuppoſe he ſhould be drowned in going beyond ſeas? what am I to do then?"

"You muſt not," ſaid Cecilia, "indulge ſuch fears; I doubt not but your ſon will return well, and return all that you wiſh."

"Nobody knows that, ma'am; and the only way to be certain is for him not to go at all; and I'm ſurpriſed, ma'am, you can wiſh him to make ſuch a journey to nobody knows where, with nothing but a young maſter that he muſt as good as teach his A. B. C. all the way they go!"

"Certainly," ſaid Cecilia, amazed at this accuſation, "I ſhould not wiſh him to go abroad, if any thing more eligible could be done by his remaining in England: but as no proſpect of that ſort ſeems before him,

you

you muſt endeavour to reconcile yourſelf to parting with him."

"Yes, but how am I to do that, when I don't know if ever I ſhall ſee him again? Who could have thought of his living ſo among the great folks, and then coming to want! I'm ſure I thought they'd have provided for him like a ſon of their own, for he uſed to go about to all the public places juſt as they did themſelves. Day after day I uſed to be counting for when he would come to tell me he'd got a place at court, or ſomething of that ſort, for I never could tell what it would be: and then the next news I heard, was that he was ſhut up in this poor bit of place, with nobody troubling their heads about him! however, I'll never be perſuaded but he might have done better, if he would but have ſpoke a good word for himſelf, or elſe have let me done it for him: inſtead of which, he never would ſo much as let me ſee any of his grand friends, though I would not have made the leaſt ſcruple in the world to have aſked them for any thing he had a mind to."

Cecilia again endeavoured to give her comfort; but finding her only ſatisfaction was to expreſs her diſcontent, ſhe aroſe to take leave. But, turning firſt to Miſs Belfield, contrived to make a private enquiry whether ſhe might repeat her offer of aſſiſtance.

ance. A downcaſt and dejected look anſwering in the affirmative, ſhe put into her hand a ten pound bank note, and wiſhing them good morning, hurried out of the room.

Miſs Belfield was running after her, but ſtopt by her mother, who called out, "What is it?—How much is it?—Let me look at it!"—And then, following Cecilia herſelf, ſhe thanked her aloud all the way down ſtairs for her *genteelneſs*, aſſuring her ſhe would not fail making it known to her ſon.

Cecilia at this declaration turned back, and exhorted her by no means to mention it; after which ſhe got into her chair, and returned home; pitying Miſs Belfield for the unjuſt partiality ſhewn to her brother, and excuſing the proud ſhame he had manifeſted of his relations, from the vulgarity and ſelfiſhneſs of her who was at the head of them.

Almoſt a fortnight had now elapſed ſince her explanation with young Delvile, yet not once had he been in Portman-ſquare, though in the fortnight which had preceded, ſcarce a day had paſſed which had not afforded him ſome pretence for calling there.

At length a note arrived from Mrs. Delvile. It contained the moſt flattering reproaches for her long abſence, and a preſſing

preſſing invitation that ſhe would dine and ſpend the next day with her.

Cecilia, who had merely denied herſelf the pleaſure of this viſit from an apprehenſion of ſeeming too deſirous of keeping up the connexion, now, from the ſame ſenſe of propriety, determined upon making it, wiſhing equally to avoid all appearance of conſciouſneſs, either by ſeeking or avoiding the intimacy of the family.

Not a little was her anxiety to know in what manner young Delvile would receive her, whether he would be grave or gay, agitated, as during their laſt converſation, or eaſy, as in the meetings which had preceded it.

She found Mrs. Delvile, however, alone; and, extremely kind to her, yet much ſurpriſed, and half diſpleaſed, that ſhe had ſo long been abſent. Cecilia, though ſomewhat diſtreſſed what excuſes to offer, was happy to find herſelf ſo highly in favour, and not very reluctant to promiſe more frequent viſits in future.

They were then ſummoned to dinner; but ſtill no young Delvile was viſible: they were joined only by his father, and ſhe found that no one elſe was expected.

Her aſtoniſhment now was greater than ever, and ſhe could account by no poſſible conjecture for a conduct ſo extraordinary.

Hitherto,

Hitherto, whenever ſhe had viſited in St. James's-ſquare by appointment, the air with which he had received her, conſtantly announced that he had impatiently waited her arrival; he had given up other engagements to ſtay with her, he had openly expreſſed his hopes that ſhe would never be long abſent, and ſeemed to take a pleaſure in her ſociety to which every other was inferior. And now, how ſtriking the difference! he forbore all viſits at the houſe where ſhe reſided, he even flew from his own when he knew ſhe was approaching it!

Nor was this the only vexation of which this day was productive; Mr. Delvile, when the ſervants were withdrawn after dinner, expreſſed ſome concern that he had been called from her during their laſt converſation, and added that he would take the preſent opportunity to talk with her upon ſome matters of importance.

He then began the uſual parading prelude, which, upon all occaſions, he thought neceſſary, in order to enhance the value of his interpoſition, remind her of her inferiority, and impreſs her with a deeper ſenſe of the honour which his guardianſhip conferred upon her: after which, he proceeded to make a formal enquiry whether ſhe had poſitively diſmiſſed Sir Robert Floyer?

She

She aſſured him ſhe had.

"I underſtood my Lord Ernolf," ſaid he, "that you had totally diſcouraged the addreſſes of his ſon?"

"Yes, Sir," anſwered Cecilia, "for I never mean to receive them."

"Have you, then, any other engagement?"

No, Sir," cried ſhe, colouring between ſhame and diſpleaſure, "none at all."

"This is a very extraordinary circumſtance!" replied he: "the ſon of an earl to be rejected by a young woman of no family, and yet no reaſon aſſigned for it!"

This contemptuous ſpeech ſo cruelly ſhocked Cecilia, that though he continued to harangue her for a great part of the afternoon, ſhe only anſwered him when compelled by ſome queſtion, and was ſo evidently diſcompoſed, that Mrs. Delvile, who perceived her uneaſineſs with much concern, redoubled her civilities and careſſes, and uſed every method in her power to oblige and enliven her,

Cecilia was not ungrateful for her care, and ſhewed her ſenſe of it by added reſpect and attention; but her mind was diſturbed, and ſhe quitted the houſe as ſoon as ſhe was able.

Mr. Delvile's ſpeech, from her previous knowledge of the extreme haughtineſs of his character,

character, would not have occaſioned her the ſmalleſt emotion, had it merely related to him or to herſelf: but as it concerned Lord Ernolf, ſhe regarded it as alſo concerning his ſon, and ſhe found that, far from trying to promote the union Mr. Monckton had told her he had planned, he did not ſeem even to think of it, but, on the contrary, propoſed and ſeconded with all his intereſt another alliance.

This, added to the behaviour of young Delvile, made her ſuſpect that ſome engagement was in agitation on his own part; and that while ſhe thought him ſo ſedulous only to avoid her, he was ſimply occupied in ſeeking another. This painful ſuggeſtion, which every thing ſeemed to confirm, again overſet all her ſchemes, and deſtroyed all her viſionary happineſs. Yet how to reconcile it with what had paſſed at their laſt meeting ſhe knew not; ſhe had then every reaſon to believe that his heart was in her power, and that courage, or an opportunity more ſeaſonable, was all he wanted to make known his devotion to her; why, then, ſhun if he loved her? why, if he loved her not, ſeem ſo perturbed at the explanation of her independance?

A very little time, however, ſhe hoped would unravel this myſtery; in two days, the entertainment which Mr. Harrel had

planned, to deceive the world by an appearance of affluence to which he had loſt all title, was to take place; young Delvile, in common with every other perſon who had ever been ſeen at the houſe, had early received an invitation, which he had readily promiſed to accept ſome time before the converſation that ſeemed the period of their acquaintance had paſſed. Should he, after being ſo long engaged, fail to keep his appointment, ſhe could no longer have any doubt of the juſtice of her conjecture; ſhould he, on the contrary, again appear, from his behaviour and his looks ſhe might perhaps be able to gather why he had ſo long been abſent.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.